

Jīva-Tattva:

Did We Fall From Kṛṣṇa's Līlā?



By: Uttamaśloka dāsa, ACBSP

Table of Contents...

Maṅgalācaraṇa	3
Justifying the importance of resolving this issue	4
<i>The Crow and Tal Fruit Logic</i>	4
<i>Propagating Apasiddhānta and Misconceptions</i>	4
<i>Rāgānugā-Bhakti, Sambandha And Abhidheya</i>	6
Establishing the Truth by the Correct Analytical Process	6
Essential Preliminary Considerations	9
<i>There Was Never any Controversy About the Jīva's Origin Before ISKCON</i>	9
<i>The Hierarchy of Evidence in Śrīla Prabhupāda's Teachings</i>	9
<i>The Teachings of the Previous Ācāryas</i>	11
The analysis begins	14
<i>Establishing Core Truths and Conclusions - Tattvas and Siddhāntas</i>	14
<i>The Conclusions Derived From These Core Truths</i>	18
Deconstructing the misconceptions	20
<i>The Jīva's Misuse of Free Will</i>	20
<i>Jaya and Vijaya Are Not Examples of the Jīva's Fall</i>	21
<i>Attaining our Original Spiritual Nature</i>	22
<i>The Sleeping Nitya-Siddhas Dream Theory</i>	24
Additional relevant considerations	27
<i>Śāstric Evidence Regarding the Origin of the Taṭasthā-Śakti Jīvas</i>	27
<i>When and Where Did the Jīvas Choose Māyā Instead of Kṛṣṇa?</i>	30
Other problematic issues related to the jīva fall theory	35
<i>Rāgānugā-Bhakti and the Fall of the Jīva</i>	35
<i>Remembering Kṛṣṇa at the Time of Death</i>	44
Final thoughts and conclusions	46
Acknowledgments	47
Bibliography	47

Maṅgalācarāṇa

*om ajñāna-timirāndhasya jñānāñjana-śalākayā
cakṣur unmīlitaṁ yena tasmai śrī-gurave namaḥ*

*nama om viṣṇu-pādāya kṛṣṇa-preṣṭhāya bhūtale
śrimate bhaktivedānta-svāmin iti nāmine.*

*nāmaste sarasvati deve gauravāni pracārine
nirvīśa sunnyavādi pascatyā desatārine*

*anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau
samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śriyam
hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitaḥ
sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śacī-nandanah*

May the Supreme Lord who is known as the son of Śrīmatī Śacī-devī be transcendently situated in the innermost core of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has descended in the Age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no incarnation has ever offered before: the most elevated [*rasa*] of [*bhakti*], the [*rasa*] of conjugal love.

*nānā-śāstra-vicāraṇaika-nipuṇau sad-dharma-saṁsthāpakau
lokānām hita-kāriṇau tri-bhuvane mānyau śaraṇyākarau
rādhā-kṛṣṇa-padāravinda-bhajanānandena mattālikau
vande rūpa-sanātanau raghu-yugau śrī-jīva-gopālakau*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the six Gosvamis, namely Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha Bhatta Gosvāmī, Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī, and Śrī Gopāla Bhatta Gosvāmī, who are very expert in scrutinizingly studying all the revealed scriptures with the aim of establishing eternal religious principles for the benefit of all human beings. Thus they are honored all over the three worlds and they are worth taking shelter of because they are absorbed in the mood of the *gopīs* and are engaged in the transcendental loving service of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

*yasya deve parā bhaktir yathā deve tathā gurau
tasyaite kathitā hy arthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanah*

*vāñchā-kalpatarubhyaś ca kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca
patitānām pāvanebhyo vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ*

Justifying the Importance of Resolving This Issue

The Crow and Tal Fruit Logic

Did unlimited *jīvas* fall from participating in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* due to transgressions involving their free will, and thus, populate the unlimited material universes? Many devotees assert that discussing or debating this topic is a waste of time, and they always refer to Śrīla Prabhupāda's Crow and Tal fruit logic story to support their claim. However, the Tal fruit story deals primarily with the inconceivable issue of *how* the *jīvas* entered material existence and not specifically *from where*, which is not inconceivable, and for which there is ample and irrefutable *śāstric* evidence, fully supported by all the previous *ācāryas* and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Śrīla Prabhupāda told us during his manifest sojourn that we should not spend time discussing this topic, and instead, focus on getting free from our material bondage. His advice was typically wise and quite appropriate for that particular time, all things considered. However, upon examining this issue objectively from a philosophical perspective, it is clear that things have devolved in unfortunate ways since then. Thus, there are now more than enough reasons to revisit this topic to properly understand *jīva-tattva*, and thus, gain deeper insights into Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of this subject. Only then can this perplexing philosophical dilemma be resolved once and for all.

This treatise analyzes the primary evidence regarding the origin of the *taṭasthā-śakti jīvas* and whether or not they fell directly from Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. Yes, this is a controversial topic, but it cannot, and should not, be left unresolved any longer.

A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such conclusions, considering them controversial, for such discussions strengthen the mind. Thus one's mind becomes attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. CC, 1.2.117

Notwithstanding the primary need to focus on attaining the goal of *bhakti*, there are very important considerations related to this topic that are of great concern for Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavas in general, and specifically for members of ISKCON.

Propagating Apasiddhānta and Misconceptions

This is the first serious issue. In spite of the fact that Śrīla Prabhupāda told us not to waste time discussing this topic, over the course of almost thirty-eight years since Śrīla Prabhupāda's departure, many devotees have continued to present all sorts of convoluted explanations describing how the *jīvas* fell from Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. And they have been boldly asserting that these incorrect explanations are Śrīla Prabhupāda's direct teachings, and consequently, implying that they also represent the teachings of the Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*' and *śāstra*. Sadly, and shockingly, nothing could be further from the truth.

These rather bizarre explanations range from random nonsensical speculative ideas to the patently absurd. Although these strange ideas have their basis in statements that Śrīla Prabhupāda made in conversations, letters, lectures, and to some extent in his books, they represent convoluted extrapolations and serious misunderstandings of what Śrīla Prabhupāda was explaining, put forth by well-meaning, and no doubt, sincere devotees. These misconceptions represent unacceptable philosophical distortions (*apasiddhānta*) of Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, and they have no foundation in *śāstra* or the teachings of the previous *ācāryas*. This will become clearly evident upon objectively examining the evidence that will be presented in this comprehensive analysis.

Here are a few examples, starting with what must be one of the most egregious. On dandavats.com there was a published article titled, “We fell from the *rāsa-līlā*”. As disturbing as that may sound, in the article, the author (name withheld) stated (I’m paraphrasing, but not exaggerating), “Yes of course we understand that the *nitya-siddhas* can never fall from the *rāsa-līlā*, but the *deviant fools and rascals* certainly can and did fall!”

How any devotee could possibly come to this utterly absurd conclusion, and make such an ignorant and offensive statement like that, is beyond all rational intelligence. And yet, it was published for all ISKCON devotees and the world to see, implying that it is in fact what Śrīla Prabhupāda taught! Surely, every devotee who has read Kṛṣṇa Book knows that Uddhava and Lord Brahmā both said the Vraja *gopis’ prema* and position is of the highest stature within *all* the spiritual realms, and Kṛṣṇa Himself said even *He* could not reciprocate their love fully.

Yet somehow, this author so misunderstood Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy that he came to this astonishing and grossly erroneous conclusion, that is, that some of the most highly esteemed *gopīs*, whose *prema* is beyond measure, and who, for all eternity, have experienced the most exalted *rāsa-līlā*, the greatest of all *līlās*, were *deviant fools and rascals*, and therefore, chose to leave Kṛṣṇa to instead experience and enjoy mundane temporary material existence. And not just *some*, but an *unlimited number*, because that is how many *jīvas* are in the unlimited material universes.

Here’s another one. An ISKCON *sannyāsī* (name withheld), giving a class, was asked how the *jīvas* fell from Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*. He explained, presumably as an example, that we were wandering through the forests of Vṛndāvana and we saw a beautiful flower, but instead of first offering it to Kṛṣṇa to enjoy, we smelled it right away, and at that very moment we fell into the material world into *māyā*, because we enjoyed independent of Kṛṣṇa!

Here’s one more. Instead of this being termed, “the fall theory”, this one has been coined, “the fall-asleep theory”. It goes something like this. We are all *nitya-siddhas* - eternally liberated souls - currently residing in Goloka, but we are lying asleep and simply *dreaming* that we are in the material world. Allegedly, according to this theory, some *jīvas* can be simultaneously *nitya-siddhas* and *nitya-baddhas*, an extreme oxymoron if there ever was one. Curiously, no evidence was ever provided to explain how these sleeping *jīvas’* individual dreams and *karmic* entanglement are somehow inexplicably intertwined with the *karma* of another *jīva’s* individual dream.

As proponents of this theory explain it, our eternally perfect spiritual body (which is non-different from one's eternal identity and consciousness) is now *sleeping* in Goloka, but our *consciousness* is somehow separated and trapped in the illusion of the material world, which is only our dream. When we finally wake up from our dream, that is, become fully self-realized, we will see that we have always been in Goloka and have never actually left, and we will simply pick up where we left off participating in the *līlā* without missing a beat!

That's enough examples for now. I trust my point is more than clear. It is apparent that such speculations, with no support from *śāstra* or our *sampradāya*, only result in serious and gross misconceptions.

Rāgānugā-Bhakti, Sambandha and Abhidheya

Another very important related point needs to be made clear with regard to justifying the need for resolving the *jīva* fall misconception. It concerns the quintessential importance of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and how the correct understanding of the *jīva*'s origin is integrally connected to properly comprehending and implementing *rāgānugā-bhakti*. I will elaborate on the details later in the presentation. Briefly, it has to do with the proper understanding of *sambandha-jñāna* and *abhidheya-jñāna*. Without understanding the truth about the *jīva*'s origin, neither *sambandha* nor *abhidheya* can be correctly or fully understood.

In this regard, it is also imperative for all devotees to understand that Lord Caitanya appeared specifically to teach His devotees *rāgānugā-bhakti* as the only means to enter Vraja *līlā* in a personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, namely, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* or *mādhurya*. This fact is established irrefutably in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, as well as in the teachings of the previous *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda of course. Those details will be presented later as well.

Establishing the Truth by the Correct Analytical Process

I have participated in numerous discussions about this issue over the last two and half years, and my observations are that the majority of devotees have never objectively and critically examined a thorough and logical analysis of the most relevant evidence available regarding this topic. Most have only been exposed to bits and pieces of evidence from both sides of the argument, presented randomly, and often within heated exchanges, by devotees who only see part of the overall picture due to inadequate *śāstric* understanding, and who have not yet developed the logic skills and fine discrimination necessary to ascertain the correct conclusions. These types of limited exchanges will never lead to a comprehensive or conclusive understanding.

Devotees who support the fall theory, and who have presented more detailed analyses, always make the fundamental mistake of subjectively and arbitrarily choosing only the fall side of what Śrīla Prabhupāda presented, without first confirming what has been established in

śāstra. They then look only for evidence that supports their chosen position, filtering everything through their predisposed bias, while typically ignoring everything contradictory. That is an ascending, bottom-up approach, and a highly constrained one at that. The correct process is to first search for the truth objectively according to *śāstra* and the previous *ācāryas*. That is the descending, top-down approach - the correct method, as taught to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas*.

Avoiding the systematic descending approach, in favor of the flawed ascending method, almost always results in endless speculation and incorrect interpretations based on engaging in what I call, *semantic autopsies*, ie: spinning, twisting and dissecting Śrīla Prabhupāda's words and statements to desperately fit erroneous preconceived notions. Unfortunately, this has resulted in precisely what we observe currently with the many bizarre ideas being propagated in the name of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings.

It is because of these blatant distortions of the truth that there is a serious pressing need to rectify this unacceptable and offensive situation. These mistaken notions are not supported by *śāstra*, the *ācāryas* or Śrīla Prabhupāda in his books, and they must not be allowed to perpetuate, or the integrity of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy on this, and related matters, will be seriously compromised for future generations of Vaiṣṇavas. It is for these reasons that I have undertaken this endeavor to present the facts, along with proper *śāstric* logic and reasoning, according to *sādhū*, *śāstra* and *guru*, which is precisely how Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us to study the philosophy given by Lord Caitanya, which he carefully passed on to us.

In lieu of all these considerations, I will systematically and summarily categorize and analyze the core elements of this subject and present irrefutable evidence, not only from Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, but from the previous *ācāryas*, from *śāstra* and from Kṛṣṇa Himself. These are the primary sources used by Śrīla Prabhupāda for his presentation of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, and he instructed us repeatedly in his books, lectures and conversations, to study the *ācāryas'* books after thoroughly studying his books. I have taken his instructions to heart and have done exactly that as part of my personal *sādhana* and *bhajana*. I have not done this merely as a dry academic or intellectual exercise.

Please also note that, in my analysis, I have not incorporated any teachings from Śrīla B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja or Śrīla B.V. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, or any other contemporary Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava teacher. Although I respect them all, the evidence I have used comes solely from *śāstra*, the previous *ācāryas*, Kṛṣṇa, and Śrīla Prabhupāda. This entire body of evidence must be examined objectively, *prior* to asserting any conclusions, for anything less than this exacting method could potentially compromise our understanding of the truth.

For those who may think that *śāstric* logic is not an integral aspect of philosophical analysis and discussions between Gaudiya Vaiṣṇavas, here is a reference from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* about the qualifications of an *uttama-ādhikārī*:

The *uttama-ādhikārī* is defined as follows: The person who is skillful in scripture and logic, completely firm in his belief. with deep faith, is considered qualified as *uttama* in *vaidhi-bhakti*. BRS, 1.2.17

Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

Previously, in defining *vaidhi-bhakti*, it was said that *vaidhi-bhakti* existed where the actions were inspired by the teachings of scripture. Thus, it may be concluded that the root cause of a person's *bhakti* is faith in the content of scriptures. Conviction in the contents of the scriptures is called *śraddhā* or faith. According to the degree of faith in the scriptures, there will be classifications of persons possessing that faith. That is now the topic of discussion for two verses.

Śāstre yuktau nīpunaḥ means “conversant with scripture and logic”. This person developed firm conviction through studying thoroughly the principles of philosophy (*tattva*), the *sādhana*, and the goal. That is the meaning of *sarvathā* (in all ways).

Logic should here be understood as logic following the statements of scripture, because independent logic is condemned in verse 1.1.45:

One cannot understand *bhakti* by dry logic. This is also understood from the *Vedānta-sūtras*, 2.1.27: The Lord can be understood only through the scriptures.

A meaning should be accepted with reference to what precedes and follows. Dry logic should be rejected. *Vaiṣṇava Tantra*

A person who is qualified as above, and has deep faith, is the *uttama-ādhikārī*.

Here is an excerpt from a talk with Śrīla Prabhupāda about the importance of logic in discussions and arguments, Chicago, 7.9.1975:

Śrīla Prabhupāda: So to become angry means defeat. If two persons are in [an] argument, the man, the one party, if he becomes angry, that means he is defeated. Why one should become angry? It is the argument, logic. They should continue. And to become angry and to go away, that means defeat.

Harikeśa: They become upset because they cannot dominate you.

Prabhupāda: No, it is not the question of domination; it is the question of logic. If you do not agree to logic, then no argument can make progress.

Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda, if one does not agree to logic, does that mean that they are under the influence of *tamo-guna*?

Prabhupāda: That means he is animal.

Finally, Jīva Gosvāmī explains that there are three types of discussions – *vāda*, *jalpa*, and *vitaṇḍā*. This treatise is based on the principle of *vāda*:

In a *vāda* discussion the motive of all concerned is to find out the truth. This is the ideal kind of discussion. It is for persons who are sober and impartial about the outcome; they simply want to know what is the truth of the matter. They are in the mode of goodness.

Jalpa is a discussion wherein one is not interested in what is said by others, whether it has some truth or all of the truth, because one simply wants to be heard. Any other view or contribution is of no interest. This is the way for a person in the mode of passion.

A *vitandā* discussion is in the mode of ignorance. In this version the truth is of no value. One simply wants to win at all costs.

Essential Preliminary Considerations

There Was Never any Controversy About the Jiva's Origin Before ISKCON

Before examining any analysis or evidence, it is essential to establish several important facts. The first thing to understand is that the controversy surrounding this topic has only ever existed within ISKCON. No previous Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas, including Lord Caitanya, or any of the other major Vaiṣṇava lineages, ever debated or had issues with this topic because the correct *tattvas* and *siddhāntas* were universally accepted, ie: no one ever falls from Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* in the spiritual world. The unlimited material universes were not populated by *jīvas* who fell from Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. That never happened, and never will. Kṛṣṇa, *śāstra* and all the previous ācāryas support this truth universally.

This is very important to understand in terms of its context in Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava and Vedic philosophy. It is only because Śrīla Prabhupāda made some contradictory and ambiguous statements that this current quandary exists among his disciples and followers. An unfortunate deficiency in the understanding and application of proper *śāstric* logic and analysis has led to these misinterpretations of what Śrīla Prabhupāda presented, and has thus fostered and propagated these misconceptions.

The Hierarchy of Evidence in Śrīla Prabhupāda's Teachings

When assessing the entire body of Śrīla Prabhupāda's philosophical teachings it is particularly important to understand that there is an inherent weighted hierarchy. At the top of this hierarchy are Śrīla Prabhupāda's books, which are his primary and enduring philosophical legacy and his final conclusive position on all philosophical matters. Next in line are his formal lectures on *śāstra*, then his informal conversations with small groups of disciples and followers, and lastly, his private letters, which were intended first and foremost for the individual devotees with whom he was corresponding.

The vital necessity for understanding the reasoning behind this hierarchy is due to the simple fact that there are a number of contradictions between what Śrīla Prabhupāda presented in his books, versus some of the things he said or wrote privately. Some of the contradictions are direct and others are apparent. Therefore, when attempting to resolve any such potentially confusing issues, we must always defer to the conclusions he presented in his books, since they are understood and accepted to supersede all other sources. *Always.*

It is irrational to think that Śrīla Prabhupāda would ever consciously intend to override his books in his private letters or conversations. Thus, any letters or conversations which are, or appear to be, contradictory must be understood as adjustments made by Śrīla Prabhupāda based on his considerations of time, circumstance and audience, which is a principle he himself implemented broadly and explained to us many times. Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms this in his purports in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, where he reveals his insights regarding his approach to spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the modern world:

As an ideal *ācārya*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu devised ways to capture all kinds of atheists and materialists. Every *ācārya* has a specific means of propagating his spiritual movement with the aim of bringing men to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, the method of one *ācārya* may be different from that of another, but the ultimate goal is never neglected. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī recommends:

An *ācārya* should devise a means by which people may somehow or other come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. First they should become Kṛṣṇa conscious, and all the prescribed rules and regulations may later gradually be introduced. In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement we follow this policy of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

For example, since boys and girls in the Western countries freely intermingle, special concessions regarding their customs and habits are necessary to bring them to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. The *ācārya* must devise a means to bring them to devotional service. Therefore, although I am a *sannyāsī*, I sometimes take part in getting boys and girls married, although, in the history of *sannyāsa*, no *sannyāsī* has personally taken part in marrying his disciples. CC, 1.7.37, Purport

To broadcast the cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one has to learn the possibility of renunciation in terms of country, time and candidate. A candidate for Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the Western countries should be taught about the renunciation of material existence, but one would teach candidates from a country like India in a different way.

The teacher (*ācārya*) has to consider time, candidate and country. He must avoid the principle of *niyamāgraha* – that is, he should not try to perform the impossible. What is possible in one country may not be possible in another. The *ācārya*'s duty is to accept the essence of devotional service. There may be a little change here and there as far as *yukta-vairāgya* (proper renunciation) is concerned.

...It is not necessary that the rules and regulations followed in India be exactly the same as those in Europe, America and other Western countries. Simply imitating without effect is called *niyamāgraha*. CC, 2.23.105, Purport

Another crucial point to understand is that Śrīla Prabhupāda *never intended* that his private letters would be used as conclusive evidence for resolving any philosophical matter, especially if they contradicted what he presented in his books, or the previous *ācāryas*, *śāstra* and Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Letter to Brahmānanda, 9.28.1969:

Now, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, we are expanding and we must work in such a way that our society may stand a solid institution. In this connection I shall request you not to circulate all my letters that I address to you.

Letters are sometimes personal and confidential, and if all letters are circulated, it may react reversely. I have already got some hints like that with letters I sent to you regarding Kīrtanānanda and Hāyagrīva.

So in the future please do not circulate my letters to you. All my letters to you should be considered confidential, and if you want at all to circulate, you just ask me before doing so.

From Bhagavata Mahārāja, Śrīla Prabhupāda Memories video series:

The problem with many ISKCON devotees is that they do not understand one simple rule. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself said that in general his letters are not for everyone but they are written according to time, place and circumstance to address the issues that need to be addressed to that individual.

Just like he wrote to one disciple that Rāhu was an allegory. Then, when he was questioned about it later, he explained that he had written that only to placate the mind of that scientist devotee temporarily and that later he was going to explain the truth to him about Rāhu being reality.

The Teachings of the Previous Ācāryas

As far as integrating the teachings of the previous *ācāryas* in this analysis, Śrīla Prabhupāda stated repeatedly - in his books and lectures - that we should definitely study their books, so there is no question of ignoring those teachings or arbitrarily subordinating them to Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. That is not the *paramparā* protocol taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda. He stated repeatedly and emphatically that he would never deviate from *śāstra* or the previous *ācāryas'* teachings. They are in fact, the entire basis of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings and are equally germane to this analysis.

Without fully integrating the *ācāryas'* teachings we inadvertently devalue the essential principle of *sādhū*, *sāstra* and *guru*. Strangely, some devotees assert that, if there is a difference between the teachings of the previous *ācāryas* and something Śrīla Prabhupāda taught, we should always defer to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and just ignore what the previous *ācāryas* have presented. That is completely contrary to the principle of *paramparā* taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas*.

In this regard, some devotees foolishly, and often offensively, play the *loyalty* card, wrongly asserting that we can only accept what Śrīla Prabhupāda has presented and nothing more, if we are to be considered *loyal* to Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is also wholly against the principle of *paramparā*. It is a baseless straw-man argument. No previous *ācāryas* have ever forbidden their disciples from studying the original teachings of the *purva-ācāryas*, and neither did Śrīla Prabhupāda. There is full transcendental and philosophical equivalence between Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and the books of the previous *ācāryas*, and he never indicated otherwise. They are all part of the corpus of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy.

In addition to this, many devotees wrongly accuse those who study the previous *ācāryas'* teachings of *jumping over* Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is also a baseless accusation, because those who engage in such studies are not ignoring or minimizing Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings, rather, they are studying the *ācāryas'* teachings with the specific purpose of gaining deeper insights into Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of their foundational teachings. Thus, they are properly going *through*, and *with*, Śrīla Prabhupāda to enter the ocean of the *ācāryas'* books, under his direct guidance and approval.

The fact is that Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings give us insight into the *ācāryas'* teachings and their teachings give us the complete context to understand more clearly Śrīla Prabhupāda's presentation of what they originally established. They are reciprocally insightful and absolutely integral to understanding the entire body of their collective teachings and realizations. We must always strive to find a harmonious consensus among all of these teachings for the most comprehensive and deepest understanding of any philosophical topic, and especially the topic currently under analysis.

Here are several of many references from Śrīla Prabhupāda regarding never deviating from the previous *ācāryas* and studying their books:

The *paramparā* system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas*. By depending upon the previous *ācāryas*, one can write beautiful commentaries. However, one cannot defy the previous *ācāryas*. CC, 3.7.134, Purport

We have to follow the footprints of the *ācāryas*. *Ācārya* means *paramparā*. One *ācārya* is following the previous *ācārya*. An *ācārya* does not manufacture anything, something novel. He follows the previous *ācārya*. And therefore he, he's *ācārya*. Lecture, The Nectar of Devotion, Vṛndāvana, 11.13.1972

Thus, in order to understand Lord Caitanya, one has to follow the direct disciples of Lord Caitanya - the six Gosvāmīs - and especially the path chalked out by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī. Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Chapter 17

Within the past five hundred years, many erudite scholars and *ācāryas* like Jīva Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Vallabhācārya, and many other distinguished scholars, even after the time of Lord Caitanya, made elaborate commentaries on the *Bhāgavatam*. And the serious student would do well to attempt to go through them to better relish the transcendental messages. SB, 1.1.1, Purport

Pure devotees have prepared many books of knowledge on the basis of authorized scriptures. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and his assistants, under the instructions of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, have all written various literatures for the guidance of prospective devotees, and anyone who is very serious about raising himself to the standard of a pure devotee of the Lord must take advantage of those literatures. SB, 3.7.39, Purport

If you want to preach the gospel of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then the personalities who established, by writing these books, *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, *Vidagdha-mādhava*, so many books they have written. So we must go through them, must try to understand. Then we can understand what is the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, *Caitanya-mangala*, there are so many. *Caitanya-candradaya* by Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī. So many devotees, they have given us so many high literatures, we should consult. Lecture, Nectar of Devotion, Bombay, 1.8.1973:

Śrīla Prabhupāda, morning walk, Perth, Australia, 1975:

Paramahansa: Śrīla Prabhupāda, I remember once I heard a tape where you told us that we should not try to read the books of previous *ācāryas*.

Prabhupāda: Hmm?

Amogha: That we should not try to read Bhaktivinoda's books or earlier books of other, all *ācāryas*. So I was just wondering...

Prabhupāda: I never said that.

Amogha: You didn't say that? Oh.

Prabhupāda: How is that?

Amogha: I thought you said that we should not read the previous *ācāryas'* books.

Prabhupāda: No, you should read.

Amogha: We should.

Prabhupāda: It is misunderstanding.

The Analysis Begins

Establishing Core Truths and Conclusions - Tattvas and Siddhāntas

Before evaluating any evidence supporting the fall theory, we first have to establish the relevant incontrovertible *śāstric* truths and their conclusions, ie: *tattvas* and *siddhāntas*. These foundational truths can *never* be contradicted by any *ācārya*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda. This is a core principle of *śāstric* analysis, confirmed repeatedly throughout the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas*.

After examining and correctly understanding these axiomatic truths, only then can we properly evaluate various statements made by Śrīla Prabhupāda and other *ācāryas*, to accurately discern what their intended meanings are in the direct context of these absolute truths. That is the proper method of logical *śāstric* analysis and the very method followed by the *ācāryas*, especially Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhās*.

The first and most important fundamental truth to understand is this: there is absolutely no possibility of *māyā* or the material *gunas* having any influence in the spiritual world. No one residing there ever has any negative, deviant or envious thoughts or desires. It is absolutely impossible due to the unique transcendental nature of that realm and the eternal relationship of intense love and attachment between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. The residents of the spiritual world are constantly absorbed in *prema* for Kṛṣṇa, which increases at every second and is ever fresh. In Goloka Vṛndāvana this astonishing characteristic of *prema* is manifested to the highest degree. There are no lapses or distractions in their love.

Keep in mind that all the residents of the spiritual world are known as “*nitya-siddhas*”. *Nitya* means “eternal” - forever, without any end. It doesn't mean, “possibly eternal,” or “usually eternal” or any other ambiguous connotation. It is an absolute definition, meaning, they are “eternally perfect” because they *never* fall into illusion and *never* misuse their free will, even though it may be *theoretically* possible. Any other understanding or definition would imply that the term *nitya-siddha* is completely meaningless. There are many confirming references throughout *śāstra*. Here is one such confirmation from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

The living entities (*jīvas*) are divided into two categories. Some are eternally liberated, and others are eternally conditioned. Those who are eternally liberated (*nitya-mukta*) are always awake to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and they render transcendental loving service at the feet of Lord Kṛṣṇa. They are to be considered eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa, and they are eternally enjoying the transcendental bliss of serving Kṛṣṇa. CC, 2.22.10-11

Now let's examine a key verse from the second canto of *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* which establishes the first core foundational truth. It is in the chapter titled, Answers by Citing the Lord's Version. These answers were given by Śukadeva Gosvāmī in response to the questions posed by Mahārāja Parikṣit in the previous chapter. Read it carefully to fully understand these facts:

In that personal abode of the Lord, the material modes of ignorance and passion do not prevail, nor is there any of their influence in goodness. There is no predominance of the influence of time, so what to speak of the illusory, external energy; it cannot enter that region. Without discrimination, both the demigods and the demons worship the Lord as devotees. SB, 2.9.10

Here are some relevant excerpts from Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to that verse. I have highlighted the sections that are most relevant to this part of the analysis:

...In that sky the material qualities, especially the modes of ignorance and passion, are completely absent. The mode of ignorance influences a living entity to the habit of lust and hankering, and **this means that in the Vaikuṇṭha lokas the living entities are free from these two things.**

As confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, in the *brahma-bhūta* stage of life one becomes free from hankering and lamentation. **Therefore the conclusion is that the inhabitants of the Vaikuṇṭha planets are all brahma-bhūta living entities, as distinguished from the mundane creatures who are all compact in hankering and lamentation.** When one is not in the modes of ignorance and passion, one is supposed to be situated in the mode of goodness in the material world.

Goodness in the material world also at times becomes contaminated by touches of the modes of passion and ignorance. In the Vaikuṇṭha loka, it is unalloyed goodness only. **The whole situation there is one of freedom from the illusory manifestation of the external energy.**

...All living entities there are eternally associated without any break, and the Lord is the chief and prime entity. In the *Agama Purāṇas* also, the transcendental abode is described as follows: The associated members there are free to go everywhere within the creation of the Lord, and there is no limit to such creation, particularly in the region of the three-fourths magnitude. **Since the nature of that region is unlimited, there is no history of such association, nor is there end of it.**

...The whole Vaikuṇṭha existence proclaims that everyone there is a follower of the Lord. The Lord is the chief leader there, **without any competition for leadership**, and the people in general are all followers of the Lord.

The most important conclusion established by this verse and purport is that these truths are absolute for all time and all circumstances, with no exceptions given or implied. Thus, all subsequent statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *ācāryas* must be reconciled with these incontrovertible truths or their true intended meaning will never be properly understood. I will do this further on in the analysis to demonstrate the proper analytical methodology.

Here is another key verse from *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* that establishes the same truth, especially the fact that there is no possibility of falling from the spiritual world:

O Lord! Therefore in this world, the wise worship your pure form and the pure form of your devotee, and not the forms made of material *gunas*, since the devotees like Nārada recognize your form as *śuddha-sattva*, from which arises Vaikuṇṭha, **a place which has no fear of falling** and is endowed with spiritual bliss. SB, 12.8.46

Commentary by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura:

Therefore the wise give up the impure forms of Indra and others made of *māyā* and worship the *śuddha-sattva* forms of the Lord and his devotees. Devotees like Nārada recognize the form of Viṣṇu which is *sattva*. “What type of *sattva* is this?” **From this Lord arises Vaikuṇṭha, with no fear of falling.** There is fear of falling from Svarga. **Because there is no fear of falling there is spiritual happiness**, not happiness from results of *karma*. Therefore, it is *śuddha-sattva*, not material *sattva*.

Having established these absolute truths from *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, the primary source of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy, let's now examine what other *ācāryas* have concluded, starting with Śrīla Vyāsadeva's *Brahma-sūtras* (*Vedānta-sūtras*), including the commentary of Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana. Interestingly, and quite revealing, the very last verse in that book is this:

There is no return from the Lord's abode, because of scriptural statements. BS, 4.4.22

From Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana's commentary:

For the person who has attained the Lord's planet, by understanding Him through worship, there is no return from there. Why? Because of scriptural statements.

This is followed by *śāstric* quotes from the *Upaniṣads* and *Bhagavad-gītā* confirming this incontrovertible truth. Here are further excerpts from Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana's commentary that are clear and conclusive.

One should never worry that the Supreme Lord would desire to make the *jīva* who is dependent on Him fall from His planet, and that the devotee would ever desire to give up the Lord, since scripture describes their mutual affection for each other.

...The Lord can never let His devotees fall because *śmṛti* says the devotees have exclusive devotion to Him and **the Lord is determined never to give them up**, and because the Lord is without faults like cruelty or miserliness and the devotees are without fault, having devotion exclusively for the Lord.

This is what is said. The Supreme Lord, an ocean of affection for those who take shelter of Him, true to His word and having all His desires accomplished, destroying *avidyā*, the cause of turning away from Him, **brings these devotees, His most dear *amsas*, close to Him and never gives them up.**

The *jīvas*... becoming completely purified by service to the Lord and desiring no one else, having attained their master, the best friend, the most merciful, the form of unlimited bliss and knowledge, **never desire to leave Him.** This is what is understood from

scriptures. Those who are completely surrendered to scripture must have firm faith in this.

The *sūtra* is repeated to indicate the completion of the work.

Acyuta, who is served by the intelligent, and who, delivering His devotees from the mire of suffering, leads them to His eternal abode of knowledge and bliss, **never desires to separate those dear devotees from their deep attachment to Him for even a second.**

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana's statements are clear, unambiguous, powerful, and fully supported by *śāstra*. Śrīla Prabhupāda dedicated his *Bhagavad-gītā* As It Is to Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana and his commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra*. Can anyone possibly imagine that Śrīla Prabhupāda would ever deliberately contradict Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana's conclusive statements, or Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the literary incarnation of Kṛṣṇa? Is there any rational justification for completely ignoring, or even worse, denying their conclusive statements, in so-called loyal deference to something contradictory Śrīla Prabhupāda said or wrote in a private letter to a neophyte disciple?

The Six Gosvāmīs are known as the *purva-ācāryas* - the original foundational architects of Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy - as taught to several of them directly by Lord Caitanya. Jīva Gosvāmī is considered to be one of the foremost scholars among the Six Gosvāmīs. His *Ṣaṭ-sandarbhās* are accepted as the most comprehensive and conclusive analytical study of *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* and other related Vedic texts, in pursuance and confirmation of Lord Caitanya's teachings.

In his *Bhagavata-sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī gives a detailed analysis of Vaikuṇṭha and its inhabitants over the course of several sections, ie: *Anucchedas* 63 - 80. Beginning with *Anuccheda* 63, Jīva Gosvāmī first quotes *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*:

The Lord, gratified by his worship, showed Brahmā *Mahā-vaikuṇṭha*, to which nothing is superior, **which is free of suffering, confusion and fear of offenses** and which is praised by the *devatās* who constantly see the self. SB, 2.9.9

Here is Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on that verse:

The Lord showed Brahmā *Mahā-vaikuṇṭha* to which nothing is superior, which is absolutely free of suffering. The *kleśas* are *avidyā 'smitā-rāga-dveṣābhīniveśāḥ*: ignorance, ego, attachment, hatred and clinging to life. (*Yoga-sūtras* 2.3) There is no intense mental confusion from not seeing the Lord. **It is free of fear of offenses in serving the Lord.** It is praised by Indra and others. *Svadarṣṭavadbhiḥ* indicates that these persons have continual vision of the self. This negates the idea that Indra and others are purely material.

“Free of confusion and fear of offenses in serving the Lord” means no one would ever become envious of Kṛṣṇa, or desire to be like Him, or reject Him in any way. In *Anuccheda* 65, Jīva Gosvāmī states, “**There is no unsteadiness or falling in the spiritual world.**” In *Anuccheda* 66, he states, “**Vaikuṇṭha is beyond the material world, which the devotee never leaves.**”

Extensive supporting references and analysis follows each of these initial statements. Nowhere in any of his *Sandarbhās* does Jīva Gosvāmī ever mention anything about unlimited *jīvas* falling from Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* to populate the material universes, or that such a possibility even exists. Quite the opposite, as the above references prove beyond any doubt.

I have conclusively established and confirmed complete agreement between Śrīla Vyāsadeva (in both *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam* and *Brahma-sūtra*), Jīva Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana, and Śrīla Prabhupāda, regarding these core absolute truths (*tattvas*) and their conclusions (*siddhāntas*). Rest assured that there are many more verses and commentaries in *śāstra* confirming these same truths, and I have not intentionally left out any relevant evidence to the contrary from these excerpts. Contradictory evidence does not exist in *śāstra* or the books of the *ācāryas*.

The Conclusions Derived From These Core Truths

The truths delineated in these texts and commentaries, can never be contradicted by any *ācārya*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda. This must be thoroughly understood and accepted by all serious devotees. There are no exceptions to this fundamental principle. Thus, there is no possibility for anyone in the spiritual world to become envious of Kṛṣṇa, or to become attracted to *māyā*'s illusory enjoyments, or to develop an aversion to Kṛṣṇa's service, or to reject Kṛṣṇa in any way. No exceptions were given. Everything was confirmed as eternal, and bound by mutual love between Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. The story of Jaya and Vijaya is a special *līlā* and will be reviewed later.

Therefore, the only logical, reasonable and final conclusion based on the import of the truths just established is this: whenever Śrīla Prabhupāda or the *ācāryas* made statements such as, "we became envious of Kṛṣṇa; we were rebellious and rejected, or left, or turned away from Kṛṣṇa; we wanted to be like Kṛṣṇa; we wanted, or chose, to enjoy independent of Kṛṣṇa; we forgot Kṛṣṇa; we were attracted by, or chose *māyā*; etc, etc," such thoughts or desires could not possibly have happened in the spiritual world under any circumstances. The evidence given proves this irrefutably. To think that this could ever happen in the spiritual world is to grossly misunderstand these core *śāstric* truths. I will discuss where this did happen further on.

Consequently, *any* and *all* such statements made by Śrīla Prabhupāda cannot be used as conclusive evidence to prove that the *jīvas* fell from the *līlā* in the spiritual world. Such statements are all inadmissible as valid proof. Nor can anyone assert that Śrīla Prabhupāda actually intended those statements to be understood in that way because that would place him in direct contradiction to *śāstra*, Kṛṣṇa and the previous *ācāryas*, which is completely unacceptable. Śrīla Prabhupāda stated many times he would never contradict the *paramparā*.

No matter how numerous these statements are, or how much they appear to be indicating a fall from the spiritual world, either directly or ambiguously, they do not constitute proof that the *jīvas* fell from Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. And when they are misinterpreted as such, to support the fall idea, they also directly contradict the preponderance of statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda

wherein he emphatically and unambiguously declares that no one can ever fall from the spiritual world.

No amount of futile *semantic autopsies* performed on Śrīla Prabhupāda's words and statements can change this absolute truth. Although it is no doubt unintentional, it is in fact extremely offensive for anyone to attempt to prove that Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly and directly contradicted *śāstra*, Kṛṣṇa and the previous *ācāryas*, all of whom only support the truth that no one ever falls from, or chooses to leave, the spiritual world. By repeatedly asserting this mistaken interpretation of his statements, it directly and incorrectly implies that Śrīla Prabhupāda understood and revealed something beyond, and contradictory to, what *śāstra*, Kṛṣṇa and the previous *ācāryas* presented, which is most certainly not the case.

It is also absolutely critical to understand that Śrīla Prabhupāda was not wrong in making these statements. It is the devotees who are solely at fault for misinterpreting what he said, due to maintaining a biased attachment to a mistaken notion, and ignoring, or being unaware of, the foundational *śāstric* truths that must be given precedence in order to derive a conclusive understanding of Śrīla Prabhupāda's intended meaning. That is the litmus test for properly understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements, ie: knowing how to interpret them in accordance with the established *śāstric tattvas* and *siddhāntas*, and the teachings of the previous *ācāryas*.

To conclude this section, here are just a few (there are many more) of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements in purports *from his books*, confirming his unambiguous agreement with these core truths, and which directly contradict statements he made in several private letters and conversations:

As described in the Vedas, the Supreme Lord is the Lord of immortality, or in other words, the Lord is immortal, and because He is the Lord of immortality He can award immortality to His devotees. In the *Bhagavad-gita* (8.16) the Lord also assures that whoever may go to His abode of immortality shall never return to this mortal land of threefold miseries.

...In the material world there is always anxiety or fearfulness in the hearts of all living entities, but the Lord, being Himself the supreme fearless, also awards the same quality of fearlessness to His pure devotees. ...Happiness in spiritual nature always increases in volume with a new phase of appreciation; there is no question of decreasing the bliss. SB, 2.6.18, Purport

The *nitya-siddha* devotees never fall down to the region of the material atmosphere. SB, 3.3.26, Purport

In the Vaikuṇṭha world there is no disharmony between the Lord and the residents. Therefore God's creation in the Vaikuṇṭha world is perfect. There is no cause of fear. The entire kingdom of God is such a completely harmonious unit that there is no possibility of enmity. Everything there is absolute. SB, 3.15.33, Purport

From Vedic scriptures it is understood that sometimes even Brahmā and Indra fall down, but a devotee in the transcendental abode of the Lord never falls. SB, 3.15.48, Purport

The conclusion is that no one falls from the spiritual world, or Vaikuṇṭha planet, for it is the eternal abode. SB, 3.16.26, Purport

A devotee, once accepted by the Lord, can never fall down. That is the conclusion of this incident. SB, 3.16.29, Purport

The eternally liberated living entities are in the spiritual world, Vaikuṇṭha *jagat*, and they never fall into the material world. SB, 5.11.12, Purport

Therefore it is to be understood that when Jaya and Vijaya descended to this material world, they came because there was something to be done for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Otherwise it is a fact that no one falls from Vaikuṇṭha. SB, 7.1.35, Purport

The *nitya-baddhas* are always conditioned by the external energy, and the *nitya-muktas* never come in contact with the external energy. CC Madhya 22.14-15, Purport

Deconstructing the Misconceptions

The Jīva's Misuse of Free Will

Having established these key conclusions, and having dispensed with a significant portion of inadmissible misinterpretations, constantly proffered by those supporting the fall theory, we can now also easily understand this fact: every time Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke about the free will of the *jīvas* and the possibility of them misusing it and choosing to leave the *līlā*, he was only speaking *theoretically* and *not literally*, because such thoughts or choices never actually happen in the spiritual world. Everyone in the spiritual world is *nitya-siddha* and they *never* misuse their free will. Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms that these kinds of discussions are theoretical in this Q&A after a lecture, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, 1.7.108, San Francisco, 2.18.1967:

Bhaktijana: When the souls [in Goloka] that were never conditioned at all, do they also have the independence?

Prabhupāda: Yes, **but they have not misused**. They know that, “I am meant for Kṛṣṇa's service”, and they are happy in Kṛṣṇa's service.

Devotee: Well, I believe you once said that once a conditioned soul becomes perfected and gets out of the material world and he goes to Kṛṣṇa *loka*, there's no possibility of falling back.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No. There is possibility, **but he does not come**. Just like after putting your hand in the fire, you never put it again if you are really intelligent. So those who are going back to Godhead, they become intelligent. Why going back to Godhead? Just like we are in renounced order of life. So we have renounced our family life after thinking something. Now, if somebody comes, “Swamiji, you take thousand millions of dollars and marry again and become a family man,” I’ll never become, because I have got my bad experience. I’ll never become.

Therefore, no matter how many examples one may present of Śrīla Prabhupāda saying that it is possible to fall from the *lilā* due to misuse of one’s free will, *all* such evidence is also rendered null and void as proof of the *jīvas* falling, because of the absolute truths that were established previously. Śrīla Prabhupāda was *always* and *only* speaking *theoretically*, and it is thus, illogical and unreasonable for anyone to attempt to extrapolate any other conclusion.

Jaya and Vijaya Are Not Examples of the Jiva’s Fall

Devotees often refer to the example of Jaya and Vijaya as support for the fall idea. Let’s examine that briefly. In this verse from *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, take note of what Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira says in the last two sentences, which is at the beginning of the story. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira was the most scholarly of the Pandavas and he knew the truth. There was no controversy for him:

Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira inquired: What kind of great curse could affect even liberated *Viṣṇu-bhaktas*, and what sort of person could curse even the Lord’s associates? **For unflinching devotees of the Lord to fall again to this material world is impossible. I cannot believe this.** SB, 7.1.34

In Śrīla Prabhupāda's Purport, the first quotes he gives are two verses from *Bhagavad-gītā* where Kṛṣṇa confirms in absolute terms that no one ever falls from His abode. Śrīla Prabhupāda does not contradict Kṛṣṇa. Here is the Purport:

In *Bhagavad-gītā* (8.16) the Lord clearly states, *mam upetya tu kaunteya punar janma na vidyāte*: one who is purified of material contamination and returns home, back to Godhead, does not return to this material world. Elsewhere in *Bhagavad-gītā* (4.9) Kṛṣṇa says:

“One who knows the transcendental nature of My appearance and activities does not, upon leaving the body, take his birth again in this material world, but attains My eternal abode, O Arjuna.”

Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, therefore, was surprised that a pure devotee could return to this material world. This is certainly a very important question.

Notice that Śrīla Prabhupāda doesn't say anything like, "No one falls *except* for the unlimited *jīvas* who populated the material universes." He is in complete agreement with Kṛṣṇa. Nārada

Muni goes on to explain the unique circumstances of this story to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira to allay his disbelief and confirm his correct understanding of this eternal truth. Nārada Muni never says anywhere that unlimited *jīvas* fell from the *līlā*, or that they could fall.

In conclusion to this section, here is an excerpt from Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to the next verse, SB, 7.1.35:

From authoritative sources it can be discerned that associates of Lord Viṣṇu who descend from Vaikuṇṭha do not actually fall. They come with the purpose of fulfilling the desire of the Lord, and their descent to this material world is comparable to that of the Lord.

The Lord comes to this material world through the agency of His internal potency, and similarly, when a devotee or associate of the Lord descends to this material world, he does so through the action of the spiritual energy. Any pastime conducted by the Supreme Personality of Godhead is an arrangement by *yogamāyā*, not *mahāmāyā*.

Therefore it is to be understood that when Jaya and Vijaya descended to this material world, they came because there was something to be done for the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Otherwise, it is a fact that no one falls from Vaikuṇṭha. SB, 7.1.35

Attaining our Original Spiritual Nature

Jīvas are *taṭasthā-śakti*, the marginal spiritual energy of Kṛṣṇa. They are not constituted of *svarūpa-śakti* like the *nitya-siddhas* in the spiritual world. Part of the *jīva's* constitutional nature (*svarūpa*) is that he is an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. But that is only the definition of the *jīva's* constitutional nature or *existential functional nature*, - the *jīva's* fundamental reason or purpose for existence. It is not a definition of, or reference to, the *jīva's* personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, as in *Vraja līlā* or *Vaikuṇṭha līlā*. A personal relationship like that has never existed in the past, since the *jīva* has never been in the spiritual world participating in any *līlās*. That fact has already been established conclusively.

The *jīvas* have an eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa in the sense that they have an eternal transcendental and existential connection, but not an eternal preexisting personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa - only the potential for one. Hence, the analogies given by the *ācāryas* that one's personal relationship with Kṛṣṇa is like a seed, or is dormant, both of which imply eligibility or potential, and not preexistence. It is vitally important to understand this distinction between our eternal spiritual connection with Kṛṣṇa, in contrast to our eternal personal relationship with Him. That personal relationship must be developed in the association of devotees on the path of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, which will be delineated in the upcoming section on *rāgānugā-bhakti*.

Here is a verse from *Brahma-saṁhitā* which explains our eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa in terms of our common spiritual nature, ie: oneness or non-difference - *abheda*, versus a personal relationship - *rasa*. I've included the commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. Note Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's statement in the second paragraph

where he makes a clear distinction between the *jīva's* eternal *connection* with Kṛṣṇa and the *jīva's eligibility* to have a personal *rasa*, or relationship, with Him. And also take note that when describing the *jīva's* eternal relationship with Kṛṣṇa, neither Jīva Gosvāmī nor Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura discuss anything specifically related to Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, as one might have anticipated. Here is the verse and commentaries:

The living entities are eternal, and they have an eternal relationship with Bhagavān that extends throughout time, with neither beginning nor end. By constitution they are intrinsically His superior potency. BrS, 5.21

Jīva Gosvāmī's Commentary:

The constitutional position of the living entities is being described in this half *śloka* beginning with the words *sa nityaḥ*. The word *nitya* (eternal) indicates that the living entity exists throughout beginningless and endless time. The living entity has an intimate and inseparable eternal relationship with Bhagavān, called *samavāya-sambandha*. **The living entities have an eternal relationship with Bhagavān, just as the rays of the sun are always related to the sun.** This has been explained in the *Nārada-pañcarātra*:

The entity who is constituted of the marginal potency, who has been manifested from the knowledge aspect of transcendence, but who is colored by the influence of *māyā's* qualities of goodness, passion and ignorance, is called the living entity (*jīva*).

It has also been stated in *Bhagavad-gītā* (15.7): “*mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke, jīva-bhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ* – the living entity is My part and parcel. He exists eternally as an individual living entity, and is therefore eternal by nature.” Thus the living entity is called superior energy. *Prakṛti* means that the living entity is a reflection of the image of Bhagavān, who is manifest as the indwelling witness, the Supersoul. In the form of the knower of the body, the living entity has attained a state like one of the Lord's predominated potencies. Therefore it is also stated in *Bhagavad-gītā*, 7.5: “*prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām, jīva-bhūtām* – the living entity is My superior potency.”

The eternal intrinsic nature of the living entity is also established by the *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* (4.6): *dvā suparṇa-sayujā sakhāyā*; there, the individual *jīvātmā* and *Paramātmā* have been compared to two birds sitting on a branch of the same *pīpala* tree.

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Commentary:

Just as the relationship between the sun and its rays is eternal, similarly the living entities have an eternal relationship with Bhagavān, the transcendental sun. Since the living entities are particles of the rays of Bhagavān, they are not temporary like material substances, and His spiritual qualities are also partially present in them. Therefore, by his intrinsic nature, the living entity is knowledge, the knower, the possessor of ego, the enjoyer, the thinker and the doer. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is unlimited, omniscient and omnipotent.

The living entity is Bhagavān's eternal servant, and Bhagavān is the *jīva's* eternal master. **The living entities are also eligible for exchanging transcendental loving *rasas* with**

Bhagavān. From the *Bhagavad-gītā* statement, *apareyam itas tv anyām prakṛtiṁ viddhi me parām*, it is understood that the living entity is Śrī Kṛṣṇa's superior potency.

All the qualities of the pure *jīvātmā* are beyond the eight components of the inferior energy, beginning with false ego. Thus, although the potency that comprises the living entities is insignificant, being composed of tiny spiritual particles, it is still superior to *māyā*. This potency is also known as the marginal potency.

The word “marginal” (*taṭasthā*) indicates that it is situated on the marginal line between the material energy and the eternal reality of spiritual existence. The living entity is liable to come under the control of *māyā* because of his infinitesimal nature. The living entities who have been conditioned from time immemorial suffer the distress of material existence, and repeatedly rotate in the cycle of birth and death. However, when the living entity submits and remains under the control of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the master of *māyā*, he can never fall under the control of *māyā*.

Thus, when Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas* make statements like, “We have fallen from *our original spiritual position*.”, they mean our constitutional spiritual *nature*, and not our *personal relationship* in Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, which has yet to be established. And even the word *fallen* is used metaphorically and not literally, because the spiritual *jīva* never *becomes* matter or actually mixes with it. Matter cannot touch or cover spirit in a literal sense. The *jīvas* are simply covered by *māyā*'s illusory potency called, *avidyā* - ignorance. It deludes the *jīvas* into believing that they are their subtle and gross material bodies. That will be discussed in more detail later, in the section explaining where the *jīvas* made their choice and entered material existence.

The Sleeping Nitya-Siddhas Dream Theory

Now I'll analyze the bizarre theory that the *jīvas* are already *nitya-siddhas* currently residing in Goloka and simply *dreaming* of being in material existence. As mentioned earlier, instead of being called “the fall theory”, this has been dubbed the “fall-asleep theory”.

It has already been proven irrefutably that there is no possibility of *māyā* or illusion in the spiritual world. Therefore, to speculate that a *nitya-siddha* or a *nitya-mukta jīva* could ever fall into illusion in the *līlā*, then fall asleep and have a bad dream of being in material existence, is quite absurd and has no basis in *śāstra* or the teachings of any *ācārya*. It is a distorted misunderstanding of what they've taught. This idea comes primarily from Śrīla Prabhupāda's explanations of the *dream-like* experience of the *jīva* in material existence. Such explanations are metaphorical and not literal.

First of all, *jīvas* cannot be in two realms at once. That is one of the limitations of *taṭasthā-śakti*. *Jīvas* are either under the control of *māyā-śakti* in the material world (*nitya-baddha*), or they are fully immersed in the *līlā* in the spiritual world (*nitya-mukta*), under the full control of the *svarūpa-śakti*. Those are the only two possibilities and they are mutually exclusive.

As was proven before in the analysis of the *jīva's svarūpa*, when Śrīla Prabhupāda says we are not really fallen, he simply means we have never lost our spiritual nature; in other words, we have not become matter, nor does spirit ever mix with matter in a literal sense. We are simply covered by ignorance (*avidyā*) which makes us falsely identify with matter, and thus we become entangled by endless *karma* under the control of the *gunas*. We are eternally bound (*nitya-baddha*) by ever-changing temporary illusions. That's why it is compared to a dream.

However, when we wake up from a dream, the objects in the dream cease to exist, and they never existed as gross matter in the dream, ie: a car in a dream is not made of metal - it is only an ephemeral mental construct or image, which ceases to exist when we wake up. When we become fully liberated in the material world, this world will not cease to exist.

It will still be manifest right in front of our eyes because the substances which comprise the material universe are very real, as described in detail in Śrīmad-bhāgavatam, namely, the creation of the material universe. It is the ever-changing transformations and manifestations of matter which are temporary. Vaiṣṇavas do not say the world is false like the *māyāvādīs*. We say it is real, but temporary, and thus illusory. The experiences are very real, but our perception of them is illusory - just like a dream.

Here is supporting evidence from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

The theory of illusion can be applied only when the living entity identifies himself with the body. As far as the cosmic manifestation is concerned, it cannot be called false, although it is certainly temporary. CC, 2.6.173

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Purport:

The living entity is the eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa. Being part and parcel of the Lord, he is constitutionally pure, but due to his contact with material energy, he identifies himself with either the gross or the subtle material body. Such identification is certainly false and constitutes the genuine platform of the theory of illusion. The living entity is eternal; he can never be subjected to the limits of time, as are his gross and subtle bodies.

The cosmic manifestation is never false, but it is subject to change by the influence of the time factor. For a living entity to accept this cosmic manifestation as the field for his sense enjoyment is certainly illusory. This material world is the manifestation of the material energy of the Lord. This is explained by Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, 7.4:

Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego - all together these eight constitute My separated material energies.

The material world is the inferior energy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, but it is not a fact that the Supreme Lord has been transformed into this material world. The *māyāvādī* philosophers, devoid of true understanding, have confused the theory of illusion and the theory of the cosmic manifestation by word jugglery.

The theory of illusion can be applied to a person who identifies himself with the body. The living entity is the superior energy of the Supreme Lord, and the material world is the inferior energy. Both, however, are *prakṛti* (energy). Although the energies are simultaneously one with the Lord and different from Him, the Lord never loses His personal form due to the transformation of His different energies.

Could it be any clearer? In *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, Kṛṣṇa uses the dream analogy to explain to Uddhava the illusory nature of *māyā's avidyā*:

Just as a dream is merely a creation of one's intelligence but has no actual substance, similarly, material lamentation, illusion, happiness, distress and the acceptance of another material body take place by *avidyā*, and are not based on reality. SB, 11.11.2

Commentary by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura:

He [Kṛṣṇa] explains how bondage is illusory. *Dehapattih* means “acceptance of another body after giving up a body,” or “death of the body.” Acceptance of a body takes place by *avidyā*, by a relationship with a conditioning produced by *māyā*. This conditioning arises only from identification of the *jīva* with his subtle body or *antahkarana*. Because of this identification one accepts the qualities of the subtle body - lamentation, illusion, happiness and distress - as one's own qualities.

Thus *samsāra*, consisting of identity with lamentation and illusion, is not based on reality. **Though lamentation and illusion actually exist as the creations of *māyā*, their relation with the *jīva* is false, produced by *avidyā*.** This is like the transformation of one's intelligence to produce a dream, which is false.

In *Jaiva-dharma*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also clarifies the dreaming concept by quoting *śāstra*:

There are two positions about which the *jīva-puruṣa* should inquire – the inanimate material world, and the spiritual world. The *jīva* is situated in a third position, which is a dream-like condition, and is the juncture (*taṭasthā*) between the other two. Being situated at the place where the two worlds meet, he sees both the *jada-jagat* (inert world) and the *cid-jagat* (spiritual world). *Brhad-aranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.9)

Just as a large fish in a river sometimes goes to the eastern bank and sometimes to the western bank, so the *jīva*, being situated in *karana-jala* (the water of cause that lies between the inert and conscious worlds), also gradually wanders to both banks, the place of dreaming and the place of wakefulness. *Brhad-aranyaka Upaniṣad* (4.3.18) JD, Chapter 15, *Jīva Tattva*, Page 355

The preceding explanation, along with supporting references, is the correct *śāstric* understanding of the dream-like state of the *jīvas* in material existence. It has absolutely nothing to do with being in an illusory dream while sleeping in Goloka Vṛndāvana.

Additional Relevant Considerations

Śāstric Evidence Regarding the Origin of the Taṭasthā-śakti Jīvas

Now we'll examine evidence regarding the origin of the *jīvas*, beginning with an understanding of the three basic categories of energies, or *śaktis*, of Kṛṣṇa, namely:

svarūpa-śakti - the internal personal potency - the spiritual world

taṭasthā-śakti - the marginal potency - the *jīvas*

māyā-śakti - the external potency - the material world

Their specific functions are as follows. The *svarūpa-śakti* creates the spiritual worlds and all of the *nitya-siddhas* who populate it, and it also includes potencies like the *hlāḍini-śakti*, *samvit-śakti* and *sandini-śakti*. *Māyā-śakti* creates the material universes and entangles the *jīvas*. The unlimited *jīvas* originate from the *taṭasthā-śakti*, which is not a *realm* - it is a *category* or *type* of energy.

As should now be obvious, the *taṭasthā-śakti* is a distinct category on its own, and it does not emanate from the *svarūpa-śakti*, so the *jīvas* did not begin their existence within the spiritual realm, which is entirely *svarūpa-śakti*. Otherwise, there is no meaning or purpose to delineating these separate and distinct categories of *śakti*, and that is the key point to understand. Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains this in *Jaīva-dharma*:

Vrajanātha: So *māyā* has nothing whatever to do with creating the *svarūpa* of the *jīvas* – this has to be accepted. At the same time, I have also clearly understood that the *jīva* is by nature subject to the influence of *māyā*. Now I want to know, did the *cit-śakti* create the *jīvas* and give them their *taṭasthā-svabhāva* (marginal nature)?

Bābājī: No, the *cit-śakti* is *paripurna-śakti*, the complete potency of Kṛṣṇa, and its manifestations are all eternally perfect substances. The *jīva* is not *nitya-siddha*, although when he performs *sādhana*, he can become *sādhana-siddha* and enjoy transcendental happiness like the *nitya-siddhas*, eternally perfect beings. JD, Chapter 15, Page 358

Having understood these categories, the next logical question is this: which expansion of Kṛṣṇa actually manifests or generates the *taṭasthā-śakti jīvas*, and how does that happen? We already know that Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana doesn't perform these functions directly - they are carried out by His various personal expansions, all of whom expand from Balarāma, Kṛṣṇa's first expansion.

Because Kṛṣṇa is *svayam bhagavān*, the original source of everything, in that sense, we can say that the *jīvas* were ultimately created by Kṛṣṇa. However, that does not mean that the *jīvas* literally emanated directly from Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa in Goloka Vṛndāvana does not directly involve Himself in any of these affairs. He is fully manifesting His *dhīra-lalita*

personality there, and is completely absorbed in His *līlās* with the *Vraja-vāsīs* in *prema-bhakti-rasa*, and nothing else.

Let's examine the *śāstric* evidence. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā*, chapter 20, Lord Caitanya instructs Sanātana Gosvāmī. There He says:

That original Personality of Godhead, named Saṅkarṣaṇa, first lies down in the river Virajā, which serves as a border between the material and the spiritual world. As Kāraṇābdhiśāyī Viṣṇu (Mahā-Viṣṇu), He is the original cause of the material creation. CC, 2.20.268

The Virajā, or Causal Ocean, is the border between the spiritual and the material world. The material energy is situated on one shore of that ocean, and it cannot enter onto the other shore, which is the spiritual sky. CC, 2.20.269

Lord Caitanya found chapter five of Lord Brahmā's *Brahma-saṁhitā* in a temple in South India, and it was one of His favorite books. Here is a verse and commentary from *Brahma-saṁhitā* where it is clearly stated that Mahā-Viṣṇu is the original source of the *tatasthā-śakti jīvas*. This is confirmed by Jīva Gosvāmī in his commentary. Please note that this does not refer to the unlimited *nitya-baddha jīvas* who are sleeping within Mahā Viṣṇu after the dissolution of the previous universe. Those *jīvas* are referred to separately in verse 20 of *Brahma-saṁhitā*. Here is the verse:

That master of the universe, Mahā-Viṣṇu, possesses thousands upon thousands of heads, thousands upon thousands of eyes, thousands upon thousands of arms, and thousands upon thousands of incarnations and plenary expansions. He is the Self of the cosmos, **and He alone creates thousands upon thousands of living entities.** BrS, 5.11

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

The form of Mahā-Viṣṇu is being described thus in the current verse beginning with the words *sahasra-śirṣā*. He whose innumerable incarnations appear in thousands upon thousands of plenary portions is called *sahasrāmśa*. **Similarly, He who creates thousands upon thousands of living entities is called *sahasrasūh*.** Here the word *sahasra* (one thousand) has been used to indicate an uncountable number. It is evident that the word *sahasra* is used throughout the scriptures to convey the sense of "innumerable." BrS, 5.11

Now let's examine what Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says in *Jaiva-dharma*, Chapter 16, *Jīvas Possessed by Māyā*. In this section we'll learn that Balarāma generates *jīvas* who directly enter *Vraja līlā*, and Saṅkarṣaṇa, an expansion of Balarāma, generates *jīvas* who directly enter *Vaikuṇṭha līlā*. Those *jīvas* remain in the spiritual world eternally and never fall. And, fully confirming verse 11, by Lord Brahmā in *Brahma-saṁhitā*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura explains that the *tatasthā jīvas* emanate from Mahā Viṣṇu. Here is the excerpt:

Babaji: ...Innumerable *jīvas* appear from Śrī Baladeva Prabhu to serve *Vṛndāvana-vihārī* Śrī Kṛṣṇa as His eternal associates in Goloka Vṛndāvana, and others appear from Śrī Saṅkarṣaṇa to serve the Lord of Vaikuṇṭha, Śrī Nārāyaṇa, in the spiritual sky.

Eternally relishing *rasa*, engaged in the service of their worshipable Lord, they always remain fixed in their constitutional position. They always strive to please Bhagavān, and are always attentive to Him. Having attained the strength of *cit-śakti*, they are always strong.

They have no connection with the material energy. In fact, they do not know if there is a bewildering energy called *māyā* or not. Because they reside in the spiritual world, *māyā* is very far away from them and does not affect them at all.

Always absorbed in the bliss of serving their worshipable Lord, they are eternally liberated and are free from material happiness and distress. Their life is love alone, and they are not even conscious of misery, death or fear.

There are also innumerable, atomic, conscious *jīvas* who emanate as rays in Kāranodākaśāyī Mahā-Viṣṇu's glance upon His *māyā-śakti*. Because these *jīvas* are situated next to *māyā*, they perceive her wonderful workings.

Although they have all the qualities of the *jīvas* that I have already described, because of their minute and marginal nature, they sometimes look to the spiritual world, and sometimes to the material world. In this marginal condition, the *jīva* is very weak because at that time he has not attained spiritual strength from the mercy of the object of his worship.

Among these unlimited *jīvas*, those who want to enjoy *māyā* become engrossed in mundane sense gratification and enter the state of *nitya-baddha*. On the other hand, the *jīvas* who perform *cid-anusilanam* of Bhagavān receive spiritual *śakti* by His mercy, and enter the spiritual world. JD, Chapter 16, Page 377-378

This confirms unequivocally that Mahā-Viṣṇu is the original source of the *tatasthā-śakti jīvas*, who emanate from His glance or *brahmajyoti*. Now we'll examine statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda, which confirm these facts. First, from his purports in *Śrī Īsopaniṣad*:

The all-pervading feature of the Lord - which exists in all circumstances of waking and sleeping as well as in potential states and from which the *jīva-śakti* (living force) is generated as both conditioned and liberated souls, is known as *Brahman*. ŚĪ, 16, Purport

As we have learned from previous mantras, the *brahmajyoti* emanating from the transcendental body of the Lord is full of spiritual sparks that are individual entities with the full sense of existence. Sometimes these living entities want to enjoy their senses, and therefore they are placed in the material world to become false lords under the dictation of the senses. ŚĪ, 17, Purport

Note the phrase, “from which the *jīva-śakti* is *generated* as both conditioned and liberated souls”, which clearly means *originate*, and thus confirms that these purports are not talking about yogis who have merged into the *brahmajyoti*, and who then sometimes fall back into material existence. That is not what Śrīla Prabhupāda was explaining in those purports. He also confirms this same truth in Kṛṣṇa Book:

The symptoms of the rainy season may be compared to the symptoms of the living entities who are covered by the three modes of material nature. The unlimited sky is like the Supreme *Brahman*, and the tiny living entities are like the covered sky, or *Brahman* covered by the three modes of material nature. Originally, everyone is part and parcel of *Brahman*. The Supreme *Brahman*, or the unlimited sky, can never be covered by a cloud, but a portion of it can be covered.

As stated in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, the living entities are part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But they are only an insignificant portion of the Supreme Lord. This portion is covered by the modes of material nature, and therefore the living entities are residing within this material world.

The *brahmajyoti* - spiritual effulgence - is just like the sunshine; as the sunshine is full of molecular shining particles, so the *brahmajyoti* is full of minute portions of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Out of that unlimited expansion of minute portions of the Supreme Lord, some are covered by the influence of material nature, whereas others are free. Kṛṣṇa Book, Chapter 20, Description of Autumn

The final conclusion is that Mahā-Viṣṇu, lying in the Causal Ocean, the border between the spiritual and material worlds, is the sole origin of the *taṭasthā-śakti jīvas*, who are manifest through the agency of His *brahmajyoti*. This is established conclusively by *śāstra* and the *ācāryas*, and Śrīla Prabhupāda is in full agreement.

It is also very important to understand that just because the *jīvas* emanated from Mahā-Viṣṇu's effulgence, or glance, it does not imply that their origin is impersonal. The *jīvas* are eternal individual persons and their origin is Mahā-Viṣṇu, the Supreme Person. Mahā-Viṣṇu's *brahmajyoti* is simply the *medium* through which they are generated.

When and Where Did the Jīvas Choose Māyā Instead of Kṛṣṇa?

The next aspect of the analysis of this topic is this: if the *jīvas* did not choose to leave Kṛṣṇa while participating in His *līlā*, when and where did the *jīvas* have these rebellious thoughts and choose to reject Kṛṣṇa, and thus enter *māyā*'s realm?

Interestingly, this introduces yet another philosophical dilemma; that is, the *jīvas* are said to be eternal, with no birth or beginning in time, and their bondage in material nature is also said to be beginningless - *anādi*. Thus, they are known as *nitya-baddhas* - eternally conditioned.

So, if the *jīvas* have been eternally in material existence as *nitya-baddhas*, how can it be said that there was a point in time when they made a choice to enter *māyā*, and that this choice was made *outside* of the material and spiritual worlds; that is, prior to entering *māyā*'s control?

Let's examine the available evidence from *śāstra* and the *ācāryas* for both of these concepts. First, here is a reference from *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, where Kṛṣṇa explains the *jīva*'s eternal bondage to Uddhava:

O intelligent Uddhava! The bondage of the *jīva*, who is my one part, or *taṭasthā-śakti*, by *avidyā*, is without beginning. By *vidyā*, he achieves liberation which has a beginning. SB, 11.11.4

Commentary by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura:

Bondage and liberation of My *śakti*, the *jīva*, which are apparent only, is caused by My *avidyā-śakti*, which produces the imposition of the body, and liberation is produced by My *vidyā-śakti* which removes the imposition of the body. This is brought about under the influence of My *śakti* which functions for the pastime of creation and destruction of the universe. That is explained in this verse. Though the *jīva* is My part or *aṁśa*, it should be understood to be different from Me. I have said:

This is My inferior energy. Understand My superior energy which is different from this inferior energy. It is the *jīvas*, by whom the inferior energy is employed for their enjoyment. BG, 7.5

Though the *jīva* is My *śakti*, its nature as *aṁśa* should be understood from this statement:

This eternal *jīva*, one of My parts, drags with it the senses and the sixth sense called the mind, which are situated in the bewildering *prakṛti*. BG 15.7

“You have mentioned the many living beings in the previous verse. *Śruti* also says there are many *jīvas*. *Nityo nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānam eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān*: the Lord is the chief eternal conscious entity among many eternal *jīvas*, and He alone maintains the many *jīvas*. (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13) Why do you call the *jīva* “one” in this verse?”

The *jīva-śakti* or *taṭasthā-śakti* is one, but from its many expansions appear many *jīvas*. Similarly, the one external energy called *māyā-śakti* has two aspects *avidyā* and *vidyā*, which affect many *jīvas* by expansion into many functions. Just as all the expansions of *māyā* are simply called *māyā*, so all the expansions of the *jīva-śakti* are called *jīva*. The many expansions of the *jīva-śakti* and *māyā-śakti* should be understood to be eternal.

The *jīva* is eternal, but by *vidyā* the *jīva* becomes liberated. It is said that when *avidyā* is destroyed the *jīva* attains liberation. But “destruction” simply means that *avidyā* ceases its influence on a particular *jīva* (since *avidyā* is eternal). Liberation, or *nirvana*, means the

jīva merges in *Brahman*. The *jīva* is not destroyed. *Sāyujya* means, “joining with *Brahman*.” In that condition, the *jīva*’s *svarūpa* is not destroyed.

The Lord has a superior energy, another energy called the *jīva* and a third energy, the material energy, called *avidyā-karma*. *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, 6.7.61

The *jīva-śakti* exists in various conditions in various bodies by *māyā-śakti*. From the statement of *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*, it is understood that the *jīva-śakti* is generally controlled by *māyā-śakti* for accomplishing the pastime of creation of the universe. That is stated in the verse. The *jīva* is bound by *avidyā*. *Avidyā* is beginningless because *karma* is beginningless. When liberation takes place, *avidyā* has an end for that particular *jīva*. Liberation, because it is produced, has a beginning. But because it is indestructible, it has no end.

From *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*:

Forgetting Kṛṣṇa, the living entity has been attracted by the external feature from time immemorial (*anādi*). Therefore the illusory energy (*māyā*) gives him all kinds of misery in his material existence. CC, 2.20.117

Now let’s examine some statements from the previous *ācāryas*, in their attempt to explain something that is inconceivable in terms we could comprehend, at least conceptually. We’ll start with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s own Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Here is an excerpt from his essay, *Vaiṣṇavism - Real and Apparent*:

Jīvas are of two kinds - (1) *Nitya-Mukta* (eternally free), (2) *Nitya-Baddha* (eternally enslaved). Free *jīvas* are never enslaved. They are serving the Supreme God in five different functions in His eternal blissful abode, where there is no change, no destruction, no misery. *Jīva*, once entered there, never comes back here.

The inconceivably narrowest line of demarcation between land and water or the line where land and water meet is called *taṭa*; so also the meeting line of the *cit* world, or the eternal abode of the Supreme Lord, and the *acit* world, or the *taṭa* region of *māyā* is called *taṭa*. The power of the Supreme Lord displayed at the *taṭa* is known as the *taṭasthā* (lying at the *taṭa*), or marginal power.

All the *jīvas* being the display of this power, have the inherent oscillating tendency and capability of going to the *cit* or the *acit* world. *Taṭa*, not being a resting place, *jīvas* must go this side or that; those preferring the *acit*, fell into the clutches of the octopus *māyā*, when these mortal costumes of mind and body were put on him as a punishment.

The satanic frenzy in which the *jīva* dislikes the blissful and eternal service of his Master and prefers to quench his thirsty desires of enjoying matter, opens before him a perpetual spring of liquid fire and poison at which he begins to drink deep. Thus in going to lord it over *māyā*, *jīva* became enslaved by her.

This excerpt is from another essay by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, titled, Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava:

Before acquiring material designations, the living entity is supremely pure. Even though he is not engaged in serving the Supreme Lord, he remains situated in the neutral position of *śānta-rasa* due to his marginal nature. Though the living entity born from the marginal potency does not at that time exhibit a taste for serving the Lord due to a lack of knowledge of self-realization, his direct propensity of serving the Supreme Lord nevertheless remains within him in a dormant state.

Though the indirect propensity of material enjoyment, which is contrary to the service of the Lord, is not found in him at that time, indifference to the service of Hari and the seed of material enjoyment, which follows that state of indifference, are nevertheless present within him.

The living entity, who belongs to the marginal potency, cannot remain indifferent forever by subduing both devotional and non-devotional propensities. He therefore contemplates unconstitutional activities from his marginal position. As a sleeping person dreams that he is active in the physical world without actually being involved in activities, when the dormant indifferent living entity of the marginal potency exhibits even a little apathy to the service of the Supreme Lord and situates himself in a neutral, unchanging condition for even a little time, he is infected by impersonalism.

That is why the conditioned soul desires to merge in the impersonal *Brahman*, thus exhibiting his mind's fickle nature. But due to neglecting the eternal service of the Lord and thereby developing the quality of aversion to the Lord, he cannot remain fixed in that position. In this way aversion to the Lord breaks his concentration of mind and establishes him as the master of this world of enjoyment.

Due to being situated in the marginal position, living entities who are averse to Hari assume the nature of mixed consciousness; in other words, when the marginal energy living entities mix with the external energy, they consider themselves the enjoyers and then enter the material world. The cause of the spirit soul's coming to live in this world in aversion to Kṛṣṇa is his misuse of his free will. When this aversion becomes strong, the living entities accept a material mind and body in order to enjoy the temporary material world and thus come under the control of fruitive reactions.

In these essays, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī did not mention anything about the *jīvas* falling from Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. The clear indication is that they made their choice from their marginal position. In his purports to the third Canto of *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms what Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī stated above in his Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava essay:

The pure status of consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, exists in the beginning; just after creation, consciousness is not polluted. The more one becomes materially contaminated, however, the more consciousness becomes obscured. In pure

consciousness one can perceive a slight reflection of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As in clear, unagitated water, free from impurities, one can see everything clearly, so in pure consciousness, or Kṛṣṇa consciousness, one can see things as they are. One can see the reflection of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and one can see his own existence as well. This state of consciousness is very pleasing, transparent and sober. In the beginning, consciousness is pure. SB, 3.26.22, Purport

In the beginning, from clear consciousness, or the pure state of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the first contamination sprang up. This is called false ego, or identification of the body as self. The living entity exists in the natural state of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, but he has marginal independence, and this allows him to forget Kṛṣṇa. Originally, pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness exists, but because of misuse of marginal independence there is a chance of forgetting Kṛṣṇa.

...From the status of pure consciousness, the false ego is born because of misuse of independence. We cannot argue about why false ego arises from pure consciousness. Factually, there is always the chance that this will happen, and therefore one has to be very careful. SB, 3.26.223-224, Purport

In chapter 7 of *Jaiva-dharma*, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also addresses this issue and confirms everything Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī stated. Note the phrase “the *jīva*’s first location”:

Yādava Dāsa: Why have we fallen into this illusory relationship?

Ananta Dāsa: *Bhagavān* is the complete spiritual entity and the *jīvas* are particles of spirit. **The *jīva*’s first location is on the boundary line between the material and spiritual worlds.** The *jīvas* who do not forget their relationship with Kṛṣṇa are empowered with *cit-śakti*, and are drawn from that position into the spiritual realm, where they become His eternal associates and begin to relish the bliss of His service.

Those *jīvas* who turn away from Kṛṣṇa desire to enjoy *māyā*, and *māyā* attracts them towards her by her potency. From that moment, our material state of existence comes into being and our true spiritual identity disappears. We therefore think, “I am the enjoyer of *māyā*”. This false egoism covers us with many varieties of false identities. JD, chapter 7

Because *anādi* means beginningless, and *nitya-baddha* denotes without beginning, some devotees consider that these explanations by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura should not be taken literally. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that all the *ācāryas* regularly use the word “when”, for example “*when* the *jīva* rejected Kṛṣṇa,” implying that a choice was made at some point in time by the *jīvas*. Another consideration is that the word “when” typically denotes an event that happened within the scope of material time and not an event that happened beyond material time, which is the case with the choice made by the *jīvas* who entered the state of *nitya-baddha*.

This aspect of the analysis is inconceivable, so not much more can be said after examining the available evidence. That being said, one thing is absolutely clear about these explanations, and that is this: the *jīvas* did not make their choice while participating in Kṛṣṇa’s *līlā*.

Other Problematic Issues Related to the Jīva Fall Theory

Rāgānugā-bhakti and the Fall of the Jīva

No doubt the obvious question at this point is: what does *rāgānugā-bhakti* have to do with the *jīva* fall theory? The surprising answer is that it has everything to do with it, but the unfortunate and sad truth is that most ISKCON devotees do not understand the facts about *rāgānugā-bhakti*, or its importance in the context of the teachings of Lord Caitanya and the *purva-ācāryas*. Therefore, I will first summarize these details to provide the necessary context, and show the integral connection between *rāgānugā-bhakti* and the *jīva* fall issue.

As mentioned in the beginning of this treatise, Lord Caitanya appeared for several specific reasons, of which, a most significant one was to give His devotees direct entrance into Kṛṣṇa's Vraja līlā, and that is only possible through the *sādhana* and *bhajana* of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. In *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Adi-līlā*, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī reveals the external reasons (chapter 3) and confidential reasons (chapter 4) for Lord Caitanya's appearance. I highly recommend that everyone study those chapters again, especially chapter 4. Here are the relevant excerpts. I have included some of the original Bengali from the verses in parentheses for clarification:

May the Supreme Lord who is known as the son of Śrīmatī Śacī-devī be transcendently situated in the innermost core of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has descended in the Age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no incarnation has ever offered before: the most elevated mellow (*rasa*) of devotional service, the mellow (*rasa*) of conjugal love. CC, 1.3.4

[Kṛṣṇa thinks thus] For a long time I have not bestowed unalloyed loving service (*prema-bhakti*) to Me upon the inhabitants of the world. Without such loving attachment, the existence of the material world is useless. CC, 1.3.14

Everywhere in the world people worship Me according to scriptural injunctions (*vaidhi-bhakti*). But simply by following such regulative principles (*vaidhi-bhakti*) one cannot attain the loving sentiments of the devotees in *Vrajabhūmi*. CC, 1.3.15

Knowing My opulences, the whole world looks upon Me with awe and veneration. But devotion made feeble by such reverence does not attract Me. CC, 1.3.16

By performing such regulated devotional service (*vaidhi*) in awe and veneration, one may go to *Vaikuṇṭha* and attain the four kinds of liberation. CC, 1.3.17

My plenary portions can establish the principles of religion for each age. No one but Me, however, can bestow the kind of loving service (*Vraja-prema*) performed by the residents of Vraja. CC, 1.3.26

The Lord's desire to appear was born from two reasons: the Lord wanted to taste the sweet essence of the mellows of love of God (*prema-rasa*), and He wanted to propagate devotional service in the world on the platform of spontaneous attraction (*rāga-marga-bhakti*). Thus He is known as supremely jubilant and as the most merciful of all. CC, 1.4.15-16

From Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport:

These reciprocal exchanges of mellows (*rasas*) are called *rāga-bhakti*, or devotional service to the Lord in transcendental rapture. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa wants to make known to all the conditioned souls that He is more attracted by *rāga-bhakti* than *vidhi-bhakti*, or devotional service under scheduled regulations. ...He is also causelessly merciful, and He wants to bestow upon us this privilege of *rāga-bhakti*.

[Lord Kṛṣṇa thought:] "All the universe is filled with the conception of My majesty, but love weakened by that sense of majesty does not satisfy Me. CC, 1.4.17

If one regards Me as the Supreme Lord and himself as a subordinate, I do not become subservient to his love, nor can it control Me. CC, 1.4.18

In whatever transcendental mellow (*bhāva*) My devotee worships Me, I reciprocate with him. That is My natural behavior. CC, 1.4.19

If one cherishes pure loving devotion to Me, thinking of Me as his son, his friend or his beloved, regarding himself as great and considering Me his equal or inferior, I become subordinate to him. CC, 1.4.21-22

Then, by hearing about the pure love of the residents of Vraja, devotees will worship Me on the path of spontaneous love (*rāga-marga*), abandoning all rituals of religiosity and fruitive activity." CC, 1.4.33

The truth about the preeminence of *rāgānugā-bhakti* as the primary path taught by Lord Caitanya is thus established conclusively. For further explanations of *rāgānugā-bhakti*, please refer to *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā*, chapter 8, starting from verse 221:

If one worships the Lord on the path of spontaneous love (*rāgānugā-marga*) and goes to Vṛndāvana, he receives the shelter of *Vrajendra-nandana*, the son of Nanda Mahārāja. CC, 2.8.221

From Śrīla Prabhupāda's Purport:

In all, there are sixty-four items listed for the rendering of service unto Kṛṣṇa, and these are the regulative principles enjoined in the *śāstras* and given by the spiritual master. One has to serve Kṛṣṇa according to these regulative principles, but if one develops spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa as exhibited in the activities of those who live in *Vrajabhumi*, one attains the platform of *rāgānugā-bhakti*. One who has developed this

spontaneous love is eligible for elevation to the platform enjoyed by the inhabitants of *Vrajabhūmi*.

And *Madhya-līlā*, chapter 22, starting from verse 148:

My dear Sanātana, I have now in detail described devotional service according to the regulative principles (*vaidhi-bhakti*). Now hear from Me about spontaneous devotional service (*rāgānugā-bhakti*) and its characteristics. CC, 2.22.148

The original inhabitants of Vṛndāvana are attached to Kṛṣṇa spontaneously in devotional service. Nothing can compare to such spontaneous devotional service, which is called *rāgatmika-bhakti*. When a devotee follows in the footsteps of the devotees of Vṛndāvana, his devotional service is called *rāgānugā-bhakti*. CC, 2.22.149

Here is a short excerpt from Śrīla Prabhupāda's lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam*, 1.2.33, Vṛndāvana, 11.12.1972, where he describes the stark difference between *vaidhi-bhakti* and *rāgānugā-bhakti*:

So you have to uncover. You have to discover. That discovering process is devotional service. The more you are engaged in devotional service, the more your senses become pure or uncovered. And when it is completely uncovered, without any designation, then you are capable to serve Kṛṣṇa.

This is apprenticeship. *Vaidhi-bhakti*, that is apprenticeship. Real *bhakti*, *parā-bhakti*, that is *rāgānugā-bhakti*. This *rāgānugā-bhakti*, we have to come to after surpassing the *vaidhi-bhakti*.

In the material world, if we do not try to make further and further progress in devotional service, if we are simply sticking to the *śāstric* regulation process and do not try to go beyond that... *Śāstric* process is also regulation, that is required. Without *śāstric* process you cannot go to that platform. But if we stick to the *śāstric* process only and do not try to improve ourself... The *śāstric* process is *kaniṣṭha-ādhikāra*, lowest stage of devotional service.

If I become satisfied only with these regulative principles for worshipping the Deity in the temple and following the regulative principles daily, but if I have no other idea, then *sa bhaktāḥ prākṛtāḥ smṛtāḥ*. *Prākṛta* means on the material platform. Such devotee can fall down at any moment, because he's on the *prākṛta* stage. And *prākṛta* means this *guṇamayī, prākṛti*. It is very strong. So any devotee can fall down if he remains *prākṛta-bhaktā*. So he has to raise himself above this to the *madhyama-ādhikāra*.

Clearly, *rāgānugā-bhakti* is the *only* process (*abhidheya*) to enter Kṛṣṇa's eternal Vraja *līlā* in Goloka Vṛndāvana, ie: go back to Godhead. There is no disputing or minimizing this fact. All the *ācāryas* teach this. In Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, in the First Wave, chapter 2 is *Sādhana-bhakti* (*abhidheya-jñāna*), chapter 3 is *Bhāva-bhakti*, and chapter 4 is *Prema-bhakti* (*prajayana-jñāna*).

It is explained in the first three chapters that the specific purpose of engaging in *sādhana-bhakti* is to attain *bhāva-bhakti*, which is the seed of *prema-bhakti* - the *prayojana*, or goal of life, as defined by Lord Caitanya. Here is Rūpa Gosvāmī's explanation from *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

Now *sādhana-bhakti* will be defined: Action of the senses, which produces the stage of *bhāva* is called *sādhana-bhakti*. This attained state of *bhāva-bhakti* is an eternal *sthāyī-bhāva* which is not created, but simply manifests within the soul by the spiritual energy of the Lord. BRS, 1.2.2

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

...In order to distinguish this *sādhana-bhakti* from forms of *bhakti* that involve direct realization of the lord, the word *sādhya-bhakti* is used: *sādhana* ends with the attainment of *bhāva*. *Sādhana* is that by which *bhāva* and *prema* are achieved. *Bhāva* is not included in *sādhana*. However, the *sādhya-rūpa*, or perfected form, is also *bhakti*, being a part of it. The word *sādhya-bhāva* (one meaning is "whose goal is *bhāva-bhakti*, but another meaning is "achieving its goal").

It is absolutely critical for every devotee to understand this important fact: these three stages, ie: *rāgānugā-sādhana-bhakti*, *bhāva-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti*, **must be completed before the time of death, or one is not qualified to take birth in Kṛṣṇa's *bhauma-līlā***, ie: Kṛṣṇa's manifest pastimes (*prākata-līlā*), cycling eternally throughout the material universes.

Rāgānugā-bhakti is *sādhana-bhakti*, which is *bhakti* in *practice*, and the qualifications to engage in *rāgānugā-bhakti* are that we must have progressed to the stage where we have awakened or realized which type of personal relationship we want to have with Kṛṣṇa in Goloka, namely, *dāsyā*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya* or *mādhurya*.

Then we must choose a *Vraja-vāsī* who exemplifies the *rāga* (loving attachment) and *bhāva* (loving moods) that we aspire for, and follow (*anuga*) *Vraja-vāsī*'s example in our internal *rāgānugā-bhajana*. Externally, we will continue following the *aṅgas* of *vaidhi-bhakti*, namely, *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *smaraṇam*, *arcanam*, service to one's *guru*, etc. In addition to these items, and vitally important, we must have an ever-growing intense desire - *lobha* or *laulyam* - to attain that *Vraja-vāsī*'s type of *prema*.

It is essential to understand the sequence of these developments. *First* we realize the type of relationship we desire, *then* we choose and follow a particular *Vraja-vāsī* to attain that type of *prema* by practicing *rāgānugā-bhakti*. It's also possible that one may initially become attracted to follow a particular *Vraja-vāsī*, which then automatically defines one's desired type of relationship. Thus, we don't attain *prema* first and *then* realize what type of relationship we want with Kṛṣṇa. It's the other way around. *Prema* is relationship-specific - it is not generic.

Each type of relationship has its own unique flavor of *prema* as described in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* and *Ujjvala-nīlamanī*. Therefore, without first knowing what your relationship is with Kṛṣṇa, there is no question of attaining *prema*. And we certainly don't realize our relationship

or attain *prema* after death. That is not the process taught by the *ācāryas*. It must happen before the time of death.

If we don't realize our relationship with Kṛṣṇa in this life and attain the *prema* of that type of relationship, we are not qualified to take birth in *bhauma-līlā*, ie: to go back to Godhead. Those are the facts as taught by all the *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda. Sadly, most ISKCON devotees do not understand these basic facts, primarily because these specific details regarding the process of *rāgānugā-bhakti* are not being taught according to the teachings of the *ācāryas* and Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Here is a reference from Śrīla Prabhupāda's Teachings of Lord Caitanya:

The process of transcendental realization is to follow in the footsteps of the associates of the Supreme Lord; therefore, to think oneself a direct associate of the Supreme Lord is condemned (*ahaṅgrahopāsana*). According to authorized Vaiṣṇava principles, one should follow a particular devotee and not think of himself as Kṛṣṇa's associate.

In this way Rāmānanda Rāya explained that one should accept the mood of the damsels of Vraja. In the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* it is clearly said that one should accept the emotional activities of the associates of Kṛṣṇa, not imitate their dress. One should also always meditate upon the dealings between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in the transcendental world.

One should think of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day and engage in Their service within one's mind, not externally change one's dress. By adopting the mood of the associates and friends of Rādhārānī and following in their footsteps, one can ultimately achieve the perfectional stage of being transferred to Goloka Vṛndāvana, the transcendental abode of Kṛṣṇa.

By adopting this emotional mood of following in the footsteps of the *gopīs*, one attains his *siddha-deha*. This word indicates the pure spiritual body, which is beyond the senses, mind and intelligence. The *siddha-deha* is the purified soul who is just suitable to serve the Supreme Lord. No one can serve the Supreme Lord as His associate without being situated in his perfectly pure spiritual identity. That identity is completely free from all material contamination.

As stated in the Bhagavad-gītā, a materially contaminated person transmigrates to another material body by material consciousness. At the time of death he thinks materially and is therefore transferred to another material body. Similarly, one who at the time of death is situated in his pure spiritual identity thinks of the spiritual loving service rendered to the Supreme Lord and is transferred to the spiritual kingdom, to enter into the association of Kṛṣṇa.

In other words, the qualification for being transferred to the spiritual kingdom at the time of death is to think, in one's spiritual identity, of Kṛṣṇa and His associates. No one can contemplate the activities of the spiritual kingdom without being situated in his pure, spiritual identity (*siddha-deha*).

Thus Rāmānanda Rāya said that without attaining one's *siddha-deha* one can neither become an associate of the damsels of Vraja nor render service directly to the Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, and His eternal consort, Rādhārāṇī. In this regard, Rāmānanda quoted a nice verse from *Śrīmad-bhagavatam* (10.47.60):

“Neither the goddess of fortune, Lakṣmi, nor the damsels of the heavenly kingdom can attain the facilities of the damsels of *Vrajabhūmi* – and what to speak of others?” TLC, page 318

Some devotees assume that we must be very exalted or highly elevated to begin contemplating what type of relationship we want with Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. *Rāgānugā-bhakti* is certainly very rare, but it is also important to understand that *bhakti* is a process that takes place over many lifetimes, so there is no way to know how far one has progressed in previous lives and at what point one is in this life. It has absolutely nothing to do with how many years one has been a devotee in this life.

That being said, even if one is not yet qualified to practice *rāgānugā-bhakti*, one's primary desire and focus should be to attain the qualifications for *rāgānugā-bhakti* by pure chanting of the Holy Names and serious study of the books of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous *ācāryas*.

In this excerpt from a Q&A after a lecture on *Śrīmad-Bhagavatam*, 6.3.16-17, Gorakhpur, February 18, 1971, Śrīla Prabhupāda discusses this in reference to a *neophyte* devotee:

Hamsadutta: So Prabhupāda, a neophyte devotee, he may think it might be very nice to be Krishna's friend, but he may actually be a blade of grass and he'll be fully satisfied when he comes to that stage?

Prabhupāda: No. If he thinks like that, then he should cultivate that knowledge in that way. Yes. That is described in *The Nectar of Devotion* and *Teachings of Lord Caitanya*.

Hamsadutta: But that may not be his actual position. It may be something else?

Prabhupāda: No. But when, at the time of devotional service, if such impetus comes, that means he has got such relation. It is to be developed. That's all. That means the actual relationship with Krishna is coming out gradually. It is being developed. So one has to develop it, following the footsteps of Krishna's friends in Vrindavana. These are described here.

Yes. Not directly. No. You cannot say that “I have become Sudama.” No. You have to follow the footsteps of Sudama. “I have become mother Yashoda.” No. You have to follow the footsteps of mother Yashoda. That is real position. And as soon as you say, “I am Yashoda. I am Sudama,” then it is as good as the *Māyāvādīs* say, “I am God.” You see? So *dāsa-dāsanudāsa*. That process should be followed.

Hamsadutta: Suppose someone is satisfied simply being related with the spiritual master.

Prabhupāda: That is everyone's business. Everyone's business. **That is not a particular taste.** That is the duty of all devotees.

Another very relevant point is understanding the internal processes of *rāgānugā-bhakti* as taught by all the *ācāryas*. I will explain later how this directly relates to the *jīva* fall issue. Here is the key reference from Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*:

Following after the inhabitants of Vraja, one should perform service in one's physical body (*sādhaka-rūpa*) and in one's *siddha* body (*siddha-rūpa*), with a desire for a particular *bhāva* (of a Vraja associate). BRS, 1.2.295

From Jīva Gosvāmī's commentary:

Sādhaka-rūpa refers to the physical body of the practitioner. *Siddha-rūpa* refers to the body which is suitable for one's desired service, and which has been developed by internal meditation. (*siddha-rūpeṇa antas-cintitabhiṣṭa-tat-sevopayogi-dehena*) One serves with a desire for the particular *bhāva* or *rati* of an associate of Kṛṣṇa situated in Vraja.

From Viśvanātha Cakravartī's commentary:

One performs service with the *sādhaka-rūpa* – the present body – and with the *siddha-rūpa* – the body which is suitable for serving Vraja Kṛṣṇa in the particular type of *rati* or *bhāva* one desires, and which appears through inner contemplation, with a desire for a particular *rati* directed to one's beloved Kṛṣṇa situated in Vṛndāvana.

One should follow after the dear devotees of Kṛṣṇa such as Rādhā, Lalitā, Viśākhā, Śrī Rūpa-maṇjarī and those following after them – persons such as Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs. Accordingly, one should perform mental service (*mānasi-sevā*) in one's *siddha-rūpa*, following after the examples of Śrī Rādhā, Lalitā, Viśākhā, Śrī Rūpa-maṇjarī and others. In one's physical body, one should perform services using one's body, following after persons such as Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmīs situated in Vraja.

From Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura's *Prema-bhakti-candrikā*:

I will always think of the devotional service of the lotus feet of the Divine Pair, and I will always remain attached to that. **Whatever I think of during my spiritual practice (*sādhana*) I will attain in my *siddha-deha* when I reach perfection.** This is the means of *rāga-bhakti*. PBC, 55

The treasure I desire as a practitioner I will get when I attain my spiritual body (*siddha-deha*); it is just a question of being ripe or unripe. The ripe stage is the stage of pure devotion (*prema-bhakti*), and the unripe stage is the stage of practice (*sādhana-bhakti*). That is the essential truth about devotional principles. PBC, 56

The next important point to understand is this: even if we attain *prema* in this life, we don't immediately go to Goloka Vṛndāvana in the spiritual world after death. As mentioned before, we must first take birth in *bhauma-līlā* - Kṛṣṇa's eternally cycling pastimes within the material

universes. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that we can only attain the first stage of *prema* while still embodied, because the material body cannot tolerate the external transformations caused by the more advanced stages of *prema*, ie: *sneha*, *māna*, *pranaya*, *rāga*, *anurāga* and *mahābhāva*. Thus, there is still more development required for the full manifestation of our *prema*, but that can only be done in the direct association of the *nitya-siddha Vraja-vāsīs* and Kṛṣṇa in *bhauma-līlā*.

There are other reasons as well. Because we have never had a relationship with Kṛṣṇa, we have to take birth from the womb of a *nitya-siddha gopī* to attain our eternal spiritual body of *svarūpa-śakti*, which is necessary to participate in the transcendental *līlā*. We also have to establish our identity and self-conception (*abhimāna*) in the direct context of the *līlā*, ie: who our parents and relatives are, what village we live in, who our friends are, and so on.

We will then grow up with Kṛṣṇa, the *gopīs* and *gopas* and experience being an integral part of that *līlā* just like all the *Vraja-vāsīs*. That *saṁskāra* becomes permanently engrained in our consciousness as our sole life experience, for all eternity. After all these details are perfected, including our *prema*, we will be transferred to Goloka Vṛndāvana in the spiritual world with the *Vraja-vāsīs* and enter the unmanifest eternal *līlā* (*aprākata-nitya-līlā*) as described in the tenth canto. In Kṛṣṇa Book, Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms the truth of this new beginning:

The mature devotees, who have completely executed Kṛṣṇa consciousness, are immediately transferred to the universe where Kṛṣṇa is appearing. **In that universe the devotees get their first opportunity to associate with Kṛṣṇa personally and directly. The training goes on**, as we see in the Vṛndāvana *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa within this planet. KB, Chapter 28, Releasing Nanda Mahārāja from the Clutches of Varuṇa

Here is a more detailed explanation of this process from Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's, *Raga-vartma-candrika*:

One may ask, “Why don't you say that when the *sādhaka* attains the stage of *prema* and leaves his body, he will take a *gopika* body in the spiritual world without taking birth from the womb of a *gopika*, after which he manifests *sneha* (the higher stages of *prema*) and so on, there in that body through the association of the eternally perfect *gopīs*?”

The answer here is: “No, that will not happen, because then one cannot get a harmonious acquaintance according to the human-like pastimes there, like: ‘Whose daughter is this *sakhī*? Whose wife is she? Whose daughter-in-law is she?’

‘Alright then’ one may say, ‘Then what is the harm in taking birth in the *aprākata-līlā*?’ Then the answer is no, that also cannot be. *Sādhakas* or materially conditioned souls cannot enter into the transcendental manifestation named Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma. Only perfected souls can enter it. Even through one's own *sādhana* the moods of *sneha* and so on are not easily attained.

Therefore, those devotees for whom *yogamāyā*, for the sake of perfecting their moods like *sneha* and so on, arranges that *prema* is manifest in them after they take birth in Kṛṣṇa's

materially manifest pastimes in Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhama, and before they attain Kṛṣṇa's bodily association, they are taken to Kṛṣṇa's materially manifest pastimes in Vṛndāvana.

Because practicing devotees, *karmis*, and perfected devotees can all be seen to enter into the materially manifest Śrī Vṛndāvana Dhāma, it is experienced as both *sādhaka bhumi* and *siddha bhumi*.

Then if you say, “Where will those most eager *sādhakas* stay after they attain *prema* and until they attain a *gopīka* body, after leaving their material bodies?”

Then I answer: “After the *sādhaka* body perishes, that loving devotee, who has eagerly desired direct devotional service for a long time, will at once, by the Lord's grace, receive the gift of the desired service and the audience of the Lord and His eternal associates, just as He once bestowed direct audience to Nārada Muni.

He will give the *sādhaka* a transcendental *gopīka* body. *Yogamāyā* will make that body take birth from a *gopīka* mother in the manifest pastimes when Kṛṣṇa descends to earth with His eternal associates. There will not be a moment's delay in that because the *prākata-līlā* goes on without interruption. He will take birth in that material universe where Kṛṣṇa plays His manifest Vṛndāvana *līlā* at that time. Kṛṣṇa and His associates appear when the loving practicing devotee leaves his body.

Therefore, O greatly eager *anurāgi* devotees, don't be afraid! Be at ease! All is auspicious for You!” RVC, 2.7

Finally, here is how all of these details directly relate to the *jīva* fall issue. If we already had a relationship with Kṛṣṇa in His *līlā*, and by the process of *sādhana-bhakti* we are simply re-awakening that pre-existing relationship, and picking up where we left off, then why do we have to follow a particular *Vraja-vāsī* to attain *prema* like them? Why do we have to meditate on the types of services we want to perform in the *līlā* (*mānasi-seva*) through the medium of our mentally conceived *siddha-deha*? And why do we have to take birth in *bhauma-līlā* to perfect our *prema* and relationship with Kṛṣṇa in the association of the *Vraja-vāsīs* before we can enter the spiritual world - Goloka Vṛndāvana?

Why doesn't our *prema* just manifest fully and exactly like it was before, ie: before we *fell asleep* and had our bad dream? Why do we have to take birth from a *nitya-siddha gopī* mother to get our self-conception in *Vraja līlā* if it already exists? None of these things make any sense whatsoever if our relationship already existed before and we fell from the *līlā*. Yet these are the teachings of all the *ācāryas*, including Śrīla Prabhupāda.

And where are the statements in *śāstra* or in the *ācāryas'* books which explain how we will just wake up in Goloka in our original spiritual body and pick up where we left off in full *prema*, as if we never left? There are none. Nothing even remotely suggesting that concept exists in any of their books or in *śāstra*. Does that not seem odd? If we did fall from the *līlā*, you'd think there would be descriptions like that by all the *ācāryas*, but no such statements exist, either in *śāstra*, or their books. They are highly conspicuous by their complete absence.

It should be abundantly clear to any reasonable person that *rāgānugā-bhakti* and all of its related details and processes, as presented above, make absolutely no sense if we fell from the *līlā*. And, to the contrary, everything about *rāgānugā-bhakti* completely confirms the development of a relationship with Kṛṣṇa for the first time, thus proving that the *jīvas* absolutely did *not* fall from His *līlā*.

Remembering Kṛṣṇa at the Time of Death

There is one more important and final point about “going back to Godhead” to consider. When Śrīla Prabhupāda stated, as he did many times, that we just have to chant 16 rounds of *japa* daily, avoid four particular *anarthas* (out of numerous *anarthas*), and try to remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death, to go back to Godhead, he wasn’t implying that these items were the only process necessary to attain that goal. It should now be very clear to everyone that it’s not nearly as simple as that. Not even close.

When making those statements, Śrīla Prabhupāda was speaking in succinct and simple terms to encourage us, just like a father who tells his child, “Just study hard in school, get your university degree, and your life will be successful.” Obviously, there is much more work involved in attaining success in material life, and so it is with attaining success on the path of *bhakti*.

It is also interesting to note that none of the previous *ācāryas* teach that remembering Kṛṣṇa at the time of death is a key point or goal on the path of *bhakti*. They don’t even mention it as part of the process, what to speak of giving it any focus. The reason is this: when one attains *prema* and the realization of their relationship and eternal identity (*svarūpa-siddhi*), there is absolutely no question of forgetting Kṛṣṇa at any moment, what to speak of the moment of death. It is a non-issue.

Here is a morning walk conversation, Nairobi, 11.2.1975, where Śrīla Prabhupāda talks about the fact that it’s not possible to remember Kṛṣṇa at the time of death without attaining perfection - *prema*:

Harikeśa: I'm curious about the destination of a neophyte devotee. If a neophyte devotee is with determination endeavoring for purification but he were to meet with death as he is still influenced by the lower modes, although he is seriously trying, then does he take another birth or does he go to Kṛṣṇa?

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, he has to take another birth. If he is not completely purified, he has to suffer another birth. Nobody is allowed to enter into the spiritual world unless he is cent percent pure. No allowance.

Then he has to... Therefore it is said, *śucīnām śrīmatām gehe yoga-bhraṣṭo 'bhijāyate* (Bg. 6.41). He is given chance, another chance, to take birth in a very pure brahmana family or rich family so that he may take again the chance, not in, he is allowed to enter. He is given a good chance again. That is his benefit.

Even if you are failure, still, your next birth as a very first-class human being is guaranteed. Not for others. It is only for the yogis. If he is... Therefore it is said that "What is the loss even if he is failure?" (SB 1.5.17).

This verse is very important. Even by sentiment one comes to Kṛṣṇa consciousness and discharges the regulative duties, chants Hare Kṛṣṇa, his next life is guaranteed as a human being. Even he does it for some time - he is not perfect - still, his next life is guaranteed. But others, there is no such guarantee. Even if he discharges his so-called duties, material duties, there is no guarantee that he'll become a human being. [break]

Harikeśa: They let him (Ajamila) stay in that body and then he went to Hrsikesa and performed devotional service and then became perfect.

Śrīla Prabhupāda: No, he was already perfect, but to increase his desire - "How shall I go Vaikuṇṭha?" - another time he had to go. He was a perfect; otherwise how he was saved from the Yamadūtas?

Harikeśa: So if a devotee dies and remembers Kṛṣṇa, although he is not perfect...

Śrīla Prabhupāda: **Unless he is perfect, he cannot remember Kṛṣṇa. That is not possible. That is not possible. That is theory only. He must be perfect.** Somehow or other, he has fallen, so Kṛṣṇa gives him the chance. That is special concession for devotee. Some way or other, you become devotee. Even if you cannot finish the whole job, if you fall down, still, there is guarantee that you get your birth in a very good society. That is the prerogative."

"That is not possible. That is *theory only*." Very sobering words from Śrīla Prabhupāda, proving that his statements of encouragement were just that, and not a literal description of the actual process required to go back to Godhead. Additional confirmation is found in Śrīla Prabhupāda's excerpt from Teachings of Lord Caitanya, quoted previously on page 35. Here is the key paragraph:

In other words, the qualification for being transferred to the spiritual kingdom at the time of death is to think, in one's spiritual identity, of Kṛṣṇa and His associates. No one can contemplate the activities of the spiritual kingdom without being situated in his pure, spiritual identity (*siddha-deha*). TLC, page 318

Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly gave us the knowledge of *rāgānugā-bhakti* and its processes, as presented by the previous *ācāryas*, and serious devotees should understand these facts and not inadvertently promote something that is "cheap and easy".

Final Thoughts and Conclusions

In consideration of all the concrete evidence presented in this treatise, along with sound reasoning and solid *śāstric* logic, it is hard to imagine that any thoughtful, rational, and open-minded person could still adhere to the mistaken notion that unlimited *jīvas* fell from, or chose to leave, Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, and thus, populated the unlimited material universes. It is not the truth, plain and simple. The *jīvas* did *not fall* from Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*. The overwhelming preponderance of evidence supporting that truth is absolute and irrefutable.

One final and very important point regarding those who espouse the fall theory is that they evidently do not properly understand the nature of *prema* - both the *prema* of the devotees for Kṛṣṇa, and the *prema* Kṛṣṇa has for His devotees. *Prema* is ever-increasing at every second, ever fresh and new, beyond any other blissful experience available to anyone. It directly binds Kṛṣṇa and His devotees in deeply personal and intimate ways that cannot be surpassed by any other bond. There is nothing higher or greater than *prema* - especially *Vraja prema*. Here is one of many statements from Śrīla Prabhupāda confirming this fact:

In the liberated state of affairs, the full-fledged affection for the Lord is awakened. As such, there is an unlimited flow of everlasting happiness, without the fear of its being broken as we have experienced here in the material world. The relationship with the Lord is never broken; thus there is no grief and no fear. SB, 2.7.47

And the most astonishing fact is that Kṛṣṇa is completely and literally *controlled* by the *prema* of His devotees, especially the *Vraja-vāsīs*, and most especially by Rādhā and the *Vraja gopīs*. Their reciprocal *prema* is beyond all others, and it gives them all the most intense pleasure in all of His creation.

If one cherishes pure loving devotion to Me, thinking of Me as his son, his friend or his beloved, regarding himself as great and considering Me his equal or inferior, **I become subordinate to him.** CC, 1.4.22

The exchange of spiritual happiness between Kṛṣṇa and His devotee, **in which Kṛṣṇa is controlled by His devotee**, is compared to an ocean of nectar into which the devotee and Kṛṣṇa plunge. This is the verdict of learned scholars who appreciate Kṛṣṇa's opulence. CC, 2.19.229

Knowing these extraordinary truths about *prema*, it boggles the mind and intellect that anyone could possibly imagine that any of the *Vraja-vāsīs*, what to speak of the *gopīs*, would ever become envious of Kṛṣṇa, or want to imitate Him, or would ever misuse their free will, or that Kṛṣṇa would ever let them leave Him. It is simply and utterly inconceivable. It could never happen. It has never happened - *ever*. This point cannot be stressed enough. It is the absolute truth on this matter.

In conclusion, I humbly and sincerely request all devotees, especially ISKCON devotees, and most importantly, the leadership of ISKCON, to carefully study this treatise and rectify their official position in accordance with *śāstra*, Kṛṣṇa, the previous *ācāryas*, and Śrīla

Prabhupāda's unequivocal concurrence with them. For ISKCON to hedge its bets and declare that both the fall and the no fall positions are simultaneously true, is another wholly untenable position, with absolutely no support from *śāstra* or the previous *ācāryas*. It makes an unacceptable situation even worse.

It is vitally important to maintain the integrity of Śrīla Prabhupāda's reputation as an *ācārya* in the Brahma-Madhva-Gaudiya disciplic succession, and we cannot allow blatant distortions of Vedic and Gaudiya Vaiṣṇava philosophy to be attributed to him. That would be, and currently remains, an egregious disservice to him and his teachings. May the truth prevail.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to the following devotees for their editing assistance, and/or for providing valuable additions and refinements to the text of this treatise: Gandhārvikā Dāsī, Niscalā Dāsī, Sunanda Dāsa, Dulāl Candra Dāsa, Vaiyāsaki Dāsa, Aja Dāsī, Vraja Vilāsa Dāsa, Ameyātmā Dāsa, Gaura Dāsa.

Bibliography

Śrīla Prabhupāda: BBT publications: *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, Nectar of Devotion.

Bhanu Svāmī: *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*, with commentaries by Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura; *Śrīmad-bhāgavatam*, with commentary by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura; *Brahma-sūtras (Vedānta-sūtras)*, with commentary by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana; *Bhagavata-sandarbha*, Jīva Gosvāmī.

Śrīla B.V. Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja: *Jaiva-dharma*, *Brahma-saṁhitā*, with commentary by Jīva Gosvāmī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

This treatise was finished in August, 2015. Those interested in studying the topic of *rāgānugā-bhakti* more thoroughly should read my book,

The Realization & Manifestation of Your Eternal Identity

•

Identity Transformation Through *Rāgānugā-bhakti*

It is a comprehensive study of *rāgānugā-bhakti* based on the major books of the previous *ācāryas*. The link to download it free is on my discussion forum...

<http://raganugabhakti.freeforums.net/thread/3/link-book-2-articles>

Readers can also contact me directly: Uttamasloka@riseup.net